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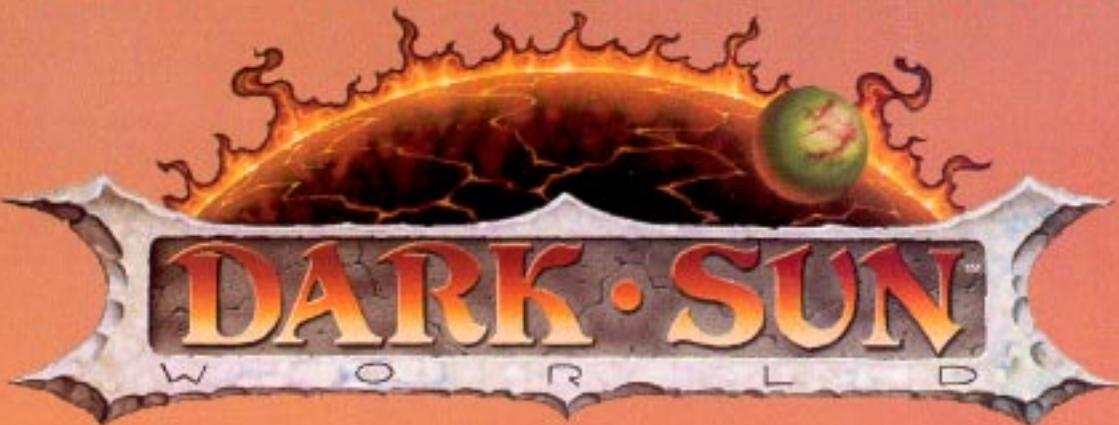
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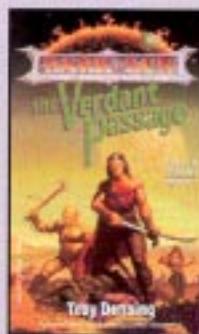
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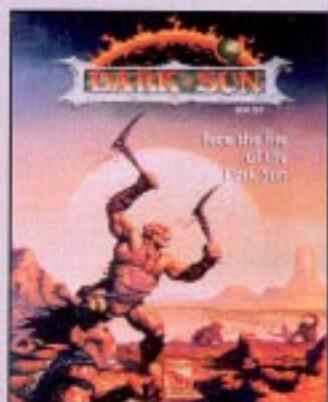
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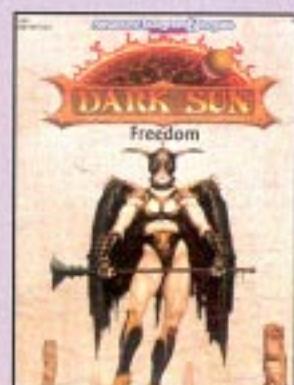
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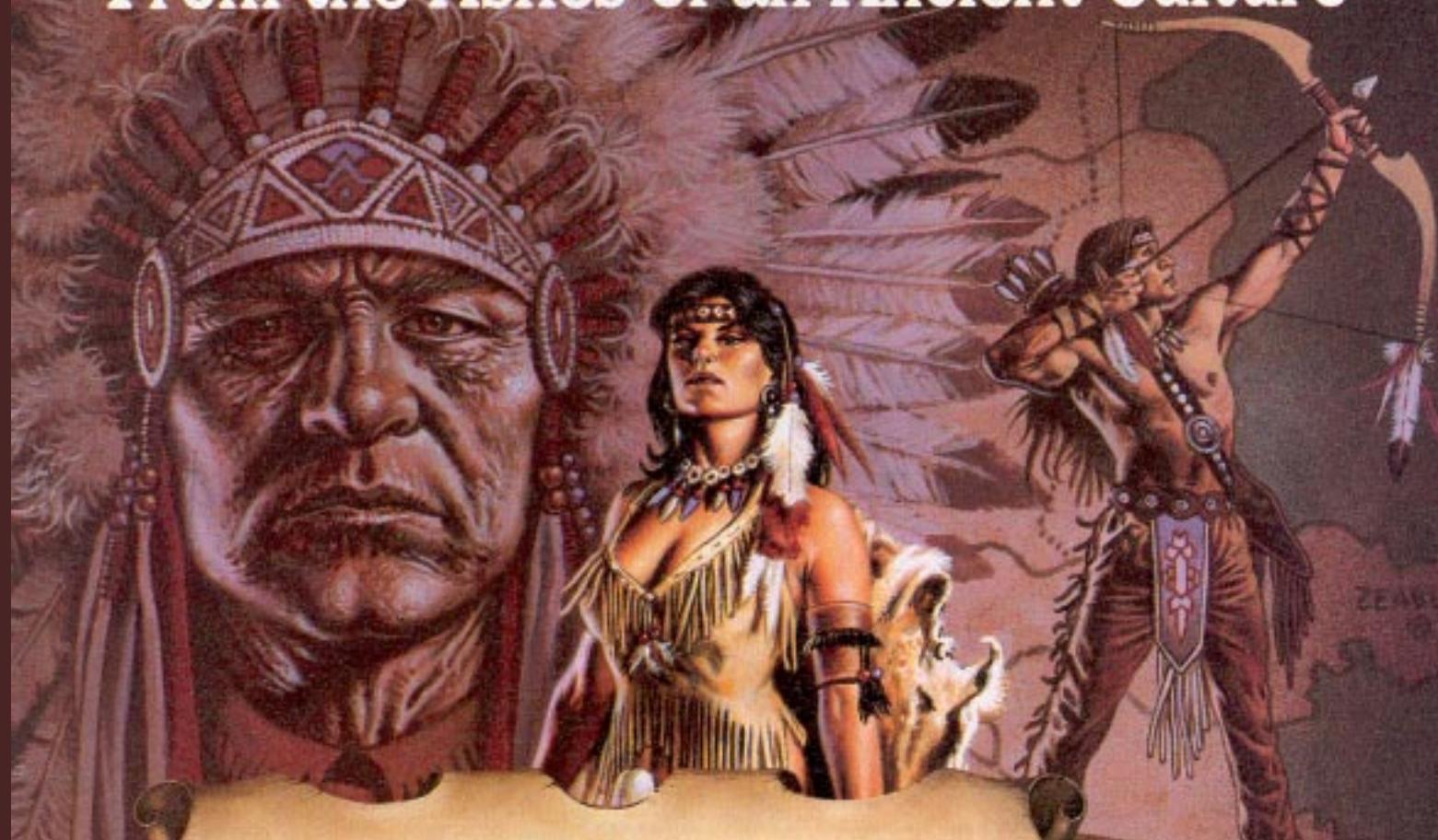
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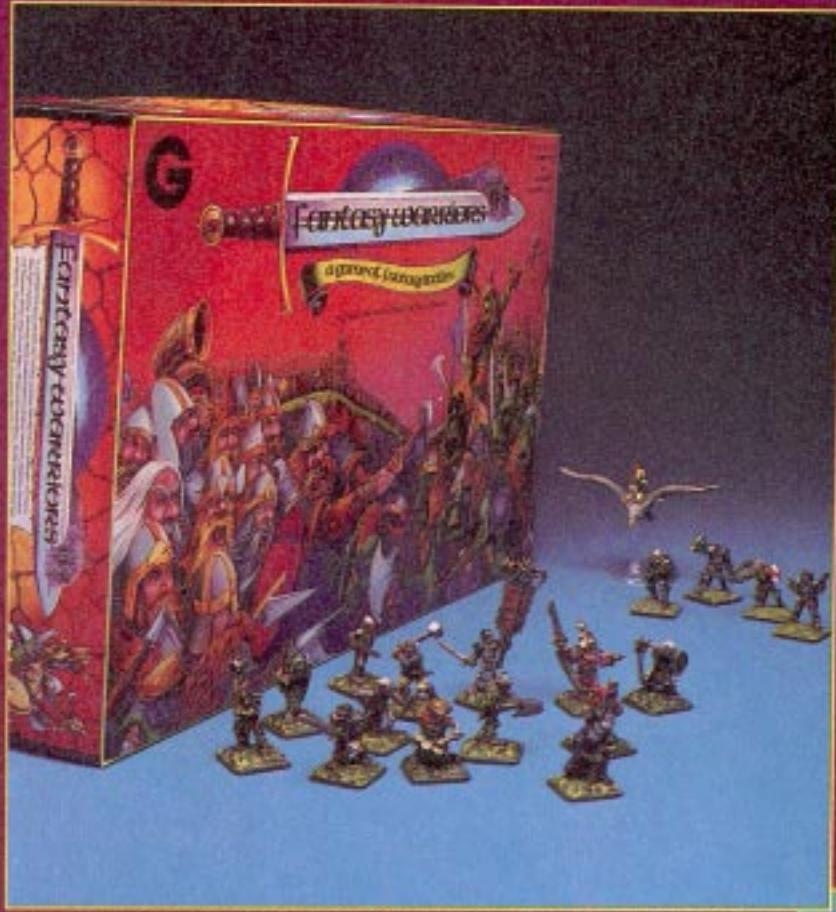
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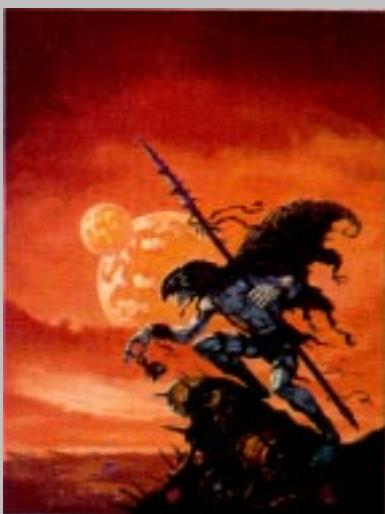
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COVER

Gerald Brom, whose artwork has brought so much of the DARK SUN™ setting to life, reveals a scene from the world of Athas. The creature with the bell is a belgoi, perhaps announcing the arrival of the wagon in the distance. But for what purpose? Visit the DARK SUN world and find out.

LETTERS

What did you think of this issue? Do you have a question about an article or have an idea for a new feature you'd like to see? In the United States and Canada, write to: Letters, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. In Europe, write to: Letters, DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LD, United Kingdom.

Mail call

The following letters were actually received by the editors of DRAGON Magazine and, except for minor editing, appear as they were written.

Dear Mr. Moore,

I am writing in regards to your editorial in issue #168. This column was entitled "This is only a test." I found the entire tone of the article degrading and ridiculous. The self-justifying nature of the column was pathetic. In reality, no one reads DRAGON Magazine because you are such a brave editor or your job is so intellectually dangerous. I doubt that the editors of *Time*, *Newsweek*, or *U.S. News and World Report* would waste valuable space writing articles designed with the sole purpose of glorifying and validating their positions.

It should be stated that, yes, you do a good job, but that's what you get paid for. If you feel insecure in your position or are currently lacking in self esteem, please see a trained professional and move on to more important topics.

Name and address
thoughtfully withheld
by the editor

I assume this means that you couldn't answer any of the questions on the test.

Speaking of intellectually dangerous, you might want to get out the "Letters" columns of DRAGON issues #137, #149, and #152 to follow the next tidbit.

Dear Dragon,

Recently, Parevé Dotrose (a 564th-level magic-user and 34th-level illusionist) teamed up with Megahnan Whitewolf (a 567th-level mage of high sorcery) to perform the greatest deed of 1991: the great **resurrection** of Waldorf, king of the nuke!

Parevé and Megahnan traveled to the Realms by way of spelljamming and sought out the cleric known as Darklight Moonbeam. They were escorted to Moonbeam's temple by a fleet of toxic dragons and welcomed by Darklight himself. After a nice dinner, Darklight allowed them to gaze upon his most recent creation: a **wand of Waldorf resurrection +36**. Needless to say, the two mages were speechless.

Megahnan convinced Darklight to help in the plan to bring Waldorf back to the land of the living. So, Darklight gathered up his gear and

his merry band of 100 kenders in order to depart on a great adventure.

After Darklight had used the wand (and the kender band had "found" all of the things there were to "find"), Waldorf was **resurrected**. But Waldorf had become a lich! The wand had malfunctioned and just happened to cast a spell that transformed the nuclear man into a mean and nasty undead.

Of course, Waldorf wanted revenge on his enemies, who had seemed to come out of the woodwork to kill him. Thus, Parevé, Megahnan, Hanibal the Minotaur (46th-level warrior), and Nicodemis (20th-level sage) wandered the multiverse, slaying the enemies of their lich leader.

The first to fall was "Fist" Xavier Redlance. Megahnan **polymorphed** Xavier's pet cloud dragon (14 HD) into a salamander and swallowed him whole. Next, Megahnan broke Redlance's **holy avenger +6** with the ancient **hammer of Kharas**, then finished him off with a 46th-level **bolt of plasma**.

Next, Megahnan used his **ring of Mirv finding** to locate the human known as Mirv the Outrageous. Megahnan quickly coughed on Mirv's band, infecting them with the horrid "burning fever" from the DRAGONLANCE® saga, then turned to face Mr. Outrageous himself. Megahnan won the first attack and slew Mirv with one hit from his **sword of infinite slaying**.

Thirdly, Hanibal captured Shamogroth Darkmane while Parevé killed Darkmane's band of 89 barbarians with his newest 42nd-level spell, **spirit rollingpin**. Darkmane fought Hanibal and killed Nicodemis (who was along for the fun) in the process. Hanibal became mad and ran Darkmane through with a footman's **dragonlance**. Shamogroth died a coward, screaming for his mommy.

Lastly, Waldorf, Hanibal, and their new slave, Thor (mentioned in issue #152) killed the hundreds of other characters who dared to try to challenge Waldorf in 1989. To top it all off, Waldorf and his new twin dragon steeds, Tiamat and Takhisis, fought a hard battle with the powerful being known only as "Dungeon Master." Of course, Hanibal was there to help in the battle, so the DM died also.

So, now that Waldorf lives again, he will begin to control, mold, and shape the world of Greyhawk as he wishes.

I sorta knew this would happen, sooner or later.

Dear Dragon,

I have come up with three solutions to the custody battle in issue #168 ("Letters"). First of all, take into consideration these questions: Did everyone in the party agree that Sir Ronis was to care for the orc? Did Sir Ronis leave the baby orc behind without telling Andre and Gwendolyn when he would come back? Is Sir Ronis able to handle the responsibility of raising Norb?

Continued on page 84

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EDITORIAL



"Crom, count the dead!"

or, How I spent my summer vacation

The convention announcement started it. "Interphase III," it said, was a live-action gaming convention to be held not too far across the state near Dodgeville, Wis., on June 22-23, 1991. Your editors (who were proofreading the "Convention Calendar" for the April issue) were intrigued, so we wrote for more information, gathered our gear, and set off to see just what a "live" role-playing game was really like.

It was great! But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Interphase III was held at Folklore Village, an ex-school and barn which had been converted into a community activities center that offered square dancing, crafts, and other good stuff. It and the campground down the road were the setting for the convention, out in the rolling Wisconsin countryside. The festivities were organized by David "Doc" Bradshaw, who came as the wizard Greensleeves. About 30 gamers from five states were present. This being Wisconsin, there were

lots of cows and cow byproducts present, too, but these were worked into the adventure.

Saturday was set aside as the day for everyone to arrive, unpack, get into costume, meet fellow players and the staff, get registered, pick up "gemstone money" (large colored stones in a nice red pouch), and acquire rumors, clues, treasure, and allies that might prove useful on the following day's adventure. There was an archery range, too, and weapons training for all fighters to show them how the live-action game's combat system worked (it used predetermined dice rolls). The wizards had to get their spells in the silo—ah, wizards tower—and nobody knows where the thieves went, but a lot of pockets were picked that afternoon ("I've got spells that are gonna *kill!*" said one wizard victim).

Some character types were so well presented as to be perfectly obvious. If you were over six feet tall, did a lot of body-building, and went bare-chested to the convention, you were likely to be a barbarian. If you dressed completely in black, you were almost certainly a thief. Between these extremes, the range of costumes was fantastic. Among the players, fighters predominated, with thieves second and a smattering of spell-casters last. There were very few clerics, which produced a problem on the following day. Everything went off well, aside from amusing little quirks like all the fighters assaulting the thieves' guild, and the cursed scroll that turned one group into mindless zombies.

I spoke with several of the "NPCs"—convention staff members who adopted game-master roles such as the fortuneteller, the local wizard (Greensleeves, a.k.a. the Grand Moca), the tax-loving sheriff (his barbarians collected some gemstone tax money from me, which I was more than



happy to share with them), and so on. All staff members wore gold armbands for easy identification. As game masters, they could check the success of pocket-picking attempts and sell magical items (the "potions" were "Pixie stix," straws full of powdered candy).

To my surprise, I discovered that there was a game going on *within* the game. Many, if not all, of the staff members were involved in a regular AD&D® role-playing campaign with Doc Bradshaw in Minnesota, and they were playing the parts of their game characters reincarnated into their current bodies. It was wonderfully confusing; I spoke with one druid/vampire, for instance, and the fortuneteller was a druid, too, or maybe a vampire, and something else—my notes aren't clear on this, but you get the idea.

The little kids weren't forgotten, either. They had their own magic show, a dinosaur piñata, candies and food, and lots of people to abuse with Nerf weapons.

Saturday evening, an incredible four-course medieval banquet was offered, complete with two highly talented elven belly dancers with swords. There was more, but for some reason I just remember the elven belly dancers. The barbarians certainly enjoyed the show, and they showed their appreciation by stamping their feet and roaring until the barn shook. What else was there—oh, yes, there was a juggler, a harpist, and an entertaining magic show that involved embarrassing a paladin (the barbarians liked that part, too). And medieval court dancing, which I discovered to my surprise that I liked. And there were some elven belly dancers. I don't want to forget them.

At dawn the next day, everyone stumbled out of their tents at the nearby campground and got ready for the quests (just like your characters do in regular role-playing, except they never use tents). Once

our group was assembled (two barbarians, an elven archer, a human ranger, a thief/mage, and a monk—notice, no clerics), we set off to find the Eye of Odin and rescue a cursed gold dragon.

Our first encounter was with a peasant mob that had been struck with a *poly morph into cows* spell. The peasants followed us across a field littered with, um, orc droppings, but they stopped when we crossed under a smoking bridge. On the other side of the bridge, we met Death, who demanded a toll in order to pass. We all survived, even the barbarian who attacked Death, and received an acid-firing gauntlet with which we accidentally shot someone in our own party (lucky for us, the squirt-gauntlet was filled with water).

Right after that, we met the elven belly dancers again, who were caught in some webs and begged us to release them. This the barbarians immediately did, which was unfortunate as the elven belly dancers were actually agents of the Spider Queen and managed to poison and/or web entangle most of our party. And they could teleport and put poisonous spiders on your back, too. We had to guess their names in order to escape across the log into Muckmoor Swamp. The swamp, by the way, lived up to its name with every squooshy footstep through the mud and tall grass (the convention staff did warn us about this, however). It was while crossing the swamp that we saw the orcs.

The orcs made a pathetic attempt to hide in the trees on the swamp's other side, but we lured them out with wild cries of "Crom, count the dead!" from the barbarians and "Firing again at the orc in chain mail!" from our elven archer. When it was over, we met the stone golem ("Crom, count the dead!") and the dragon ("Let's take 'im! His breath weapon can't get everybody!"). Again, the heavens smiled on us and we convinced the bar-

barians not to attack the dragon right away. Besides, we had to figure out the secret of the Acid Rock, which "ate men's souls" (this title turned out to have a clever homonym on which the solution rested, but I'm not giving it away here). After that came the orc blowgun ambush ("Crom!" etc.) and the recovery of the Eye of Odin, which we managed with the severe maiming of half our party. We might have gone back for the dragon, but we accidentally broke the *staff of the magi* and decided to try next year. We would have all died were it not for our healing potions, but we were luckier than the party following us, which had no clerics either and was almost slaughtered by the orcs in the trees. (There were some definite lessons there about having a well-balanced party.)

Not bad for a four-hour adventure, eh?

The whole thing was great fun, with lots of puzzles and entertainment to go with the orc-bashing, and everyone acted masterfully. My thanks go out to Doc Bradshaw and his family, to the other "NPCs" and game masters, to the elven belly dancers, and to all the players there, especially Roderick Silverfletch, Orth the Barbarian, Shirak (of the two swords), Dareth Veleve (the thief/mage), Onilon the monk, and Belbourn P. Centaur (the other barbarian). I had a great time, and maybe I can see you all again next year. I might even be a barbarian then, myself.

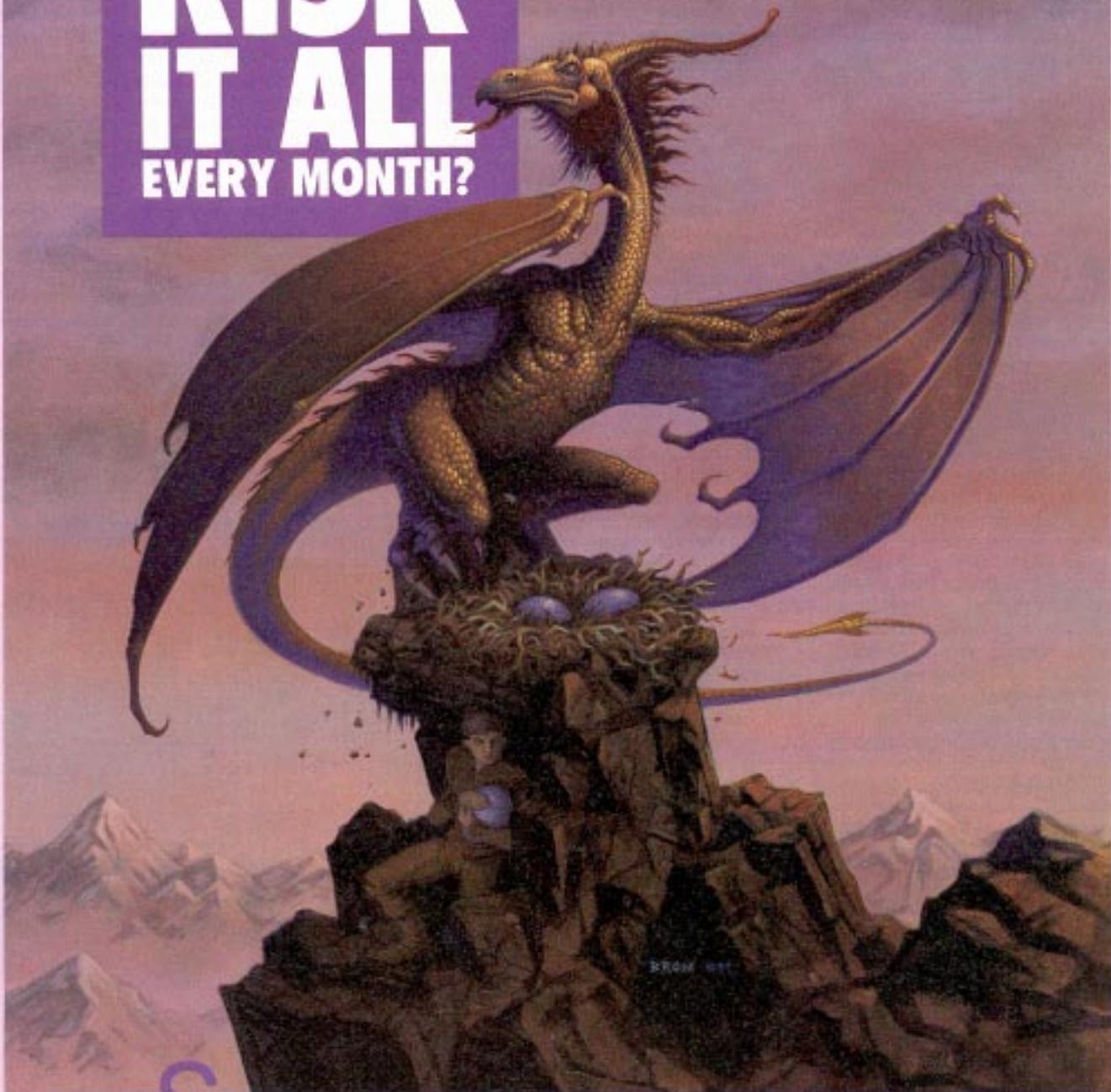
Crom, count the dead!

Roger E. Moore

Photography by Roger E. Moore



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The burned world:
Athas



Artwork by Gerald Brom

Feral halflings, thri-kreen, and half-giants—as player characters!

by Timothy B. Brown and William W. Connors



Artwork by Gerald Brom

The Monstrous Side of the DARK SUN™ World

One of the problems we faced in the development of the DARK SUN™ universe was a shortage of space. We had so much material about our new campaign setting that some tough decisions had to be made. One of the toughest had to do with monsters. In most AD&D® campaign worlds, you can count on seeing the same monsters ("Oh, look—an orc."). While this is all well and good in most settings, it just wouldn't do for the DARK SUN setting. The world of Athas had to be new and different; it had different people and different character classes, and it needed different monsters.

Of course, we didn't have the time or space to put a complete *Monstrous Compendium* in the boxed set. This is not to say that such a product is not on its way; even as you read this a team of designers is hard at work on the DARK SUN Appendix to the *Monstrous Compendium* (tentatively scheduled to appear in stores around February 1992). Until that product is available, it is possible to assemble a collection of monsters that will work just fine for DARK SUN campaigns.

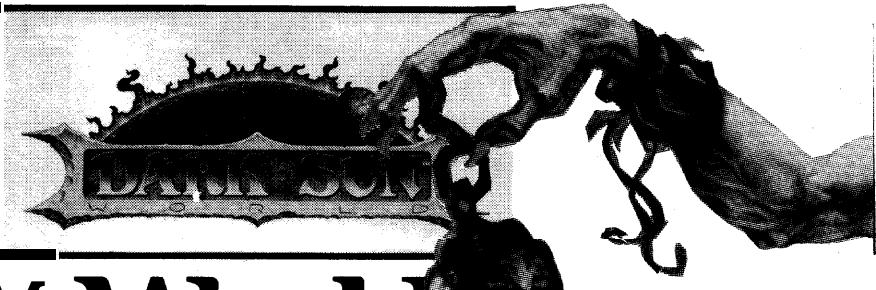
First, we begin by going over the existing *Monstrous Compendium* appendices and finding out just what is available there. Some of the creatures detailed in the various appendices do very well as DARK SUN world monsters. The table shows monsters from the various appendices that are also found on Athas, the DARK SUN world. Many of these monsters are assumed to have adapted to this ecologically ravaged land. For example, the ettercap is described as living in heavily wooded forests. Since such areas are few and far between on sunburnt Athas, we can assume that ettercaps have been forced to dwell in badlands, canyons, and similar areas. Nonetheless, the nature of the monster remains largely the same. Many of the monsters on the list are marked with an asterisk to indicate that they often have wild psionic powers in DARK SUN campaigns. The strength and nature of these powers are left to the desires of the DM.

In addition to the monsters culled from earlier appendices, the DARK SUN boxed set has a number of creatures especially

designed for this setting. In addition, the next few pages here provide *Monstrous Compendium* entries on the player-character races of Athas.

As with the monsters in the table, the shattered environment of Athas has taken its toll on the demihumans as well. The halflings of this world, for example, have little in common with their distant cousins on other worlds. They are not the peaceful, quiet folk familiar to most AD&D game players. Rather, they are feral hunters stalking the thin band of forests that still cling to life on the barren landscape. They are hunters, carnivores, and powerful psionicists.

With this stockpile of monsters in hand, DMs should have no trouble at all in filling out their DARK SUN campaigns. Of course, DMs should feel free to add their own creatures to the mix provided here. After all, the gladiatorial pits and burnt stretches of the Athasian wilds are filled with creatures the likes of which have never been seen before.



Monstrous Compendium DARK SUN™ World Monsters Table

Volumes 1 and 2

Aarakocra*	Bat	Centipede	Giant-kin, cyclops*	Plant, carnivorous	Skeleton
Aerial servant	Beetle	Dragonne*	Golem	Rat	Snake (except sea, giant)
Anhkheg	Behir*	Elementals, all	Hornet	Remorhaz	Spider
Ant	Bulette	Ettercap*	Kenku*	Roc	Wyvern*
Ant lion, giant	Cats, great	Ettin*	Lizard	Sandling	Yuan-ti*
Basilisk	Cave fisher	Genie, all*	Pseudodragon*	Scorpion	Zombie

FORGOTTEN REALMS® Appendix (MC3)

Bhaergala*	Meazel*	Rhaumbusun	Strider, Giant	Thessalmonster	Thri-kreen*
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DRAGONLANCE® Appendix (MC4)

Fire minion*	Horax	Skit	Slig*	Tylor*	Wyndlass
Hatori	Insect swarm				

WORLD OF GREYHAWK® Appendix (MC5)

Beetle	Bonesnapper	Dragonfly, giant	Dragonnel	Horgar	Plant, carnivorous (cactus, vampire)
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Kara-tur Appendix (MC6)

Goblin spider*	Jishin mushi
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* May possess wild psionic powers.

Note: No creatures from the SPELLJAMMER™ or RAVENLOFT™ *Monstrous Compendium* appendices are found on Athas. Fiends from the Outer Planes Appendix (MC9) can usually travel to and from Athas at will but do so rarely, only when summoned by dragons or great wizards.

Dwarf, Athasian

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any land
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Clan
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (9-11)
TREASURE:	Varies
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful neutral
NO. APPEARING:	3d10
ARMOR CLASS:	10
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	1
THAC0:	Normal 19 Uhrakkus 17 Uhrnius 15 Uhrnomus 11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d2 or by weapon type
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Special resistances
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	S (4' tall)
MORALE:	Elite (13-14)
XP VALUE:	Normal 35 Uhrakkus 175 Uhrnius 420 Uhrnomus 2,000
PSIONICS:	Varies

Athasian dwarves are short but extremely powerful demihumans. They average 4½'-5' in height and tend to have a disproportionately large muscle mass; a full-grown dwarf weighs in the neighborhood of 200 lbs. Lives of hard work in the hot sun leaves them with a rich tan and rugged, calloused hands and feet. Athasian dwarves live up to 250 years.

The dwarven language is harsh and guttural. Most non-dwarves complain that it eventually causes them to go hoarse after speaking it for two or three hours.

Combat: Dwarves approach combat with the same single-mindedness that they do everything else. They show no mercy, seek no quarter, and generally view every conflict as a fight to the death.

Dwarven weapons tend to be sturdy and strong, like dwarves themselves. In addition, the prodigious strength of these creatures makes their weapons especially deadly. Although dwarven hammers, axes, swords, and other weapons vary greatly in type, they usually do 1d8 hp damage. The attack rolls and damage rolls for these weapons will vary based on the materials from which they are built (see the DARK SUN rules book). In addition, the dwarves' strength typically grants a +2 bonus to damage.

Most dwarves shun the use of heavy armor. They sometimes employ shields if the weapon they wield does not require both hands to control, and use breastplates made from bones or chitin (granting them AC 7).

By nature, dwarves are nonmagical and never use magical spells. This restriction does not apply to clerical or templar spells. In addition, they are generally more resistant to poisons and disease than other races. For the average dwarf, this is reflected in a +4 bonus to all saves against magical attacks, illnesses, and toxins. Individual dwarves will have higher or lower bonuses, as detailed in the DARK SUN rules book. Athasian dwarves do have infravision, enabling them to see up to 60' in the dark by detecting differences in heat levels.



Habitat/Society: A dwarf's chief love is toil. A dwarf is never happier than when there is a cause to work or fight for, something he can approach with stoic single-mindedness for weeks, months, years, or even decades at a time. The task to which a dwarf is presently committed is referred to as his *focus*. A dwarf's focus will always be a feat requiring at least one week to complete. Actually, a dwarf's commitment to his focus is based in his physiology; those who complete their lives before they complete their foci live out their afterlives as banshees in the wastes, haunting their unfinished works!

Free dwarves organize around their families. Blood ties are ties of honor and respect. Debts from one dwarven family to the next are passed down from generation to generation. The typical dwarven community has 30-300 dwarves in it. For every 10 dwarves there is one *uhakkus* (sub-leader) with 3 HD and a steel weapon. For every 50 dwarves there is one *uhnrius* (leader) with 5 HD and a magical weapon of some type. Every *uhnrius* will have either psionic or clerical abilities. For every 100 dwarves there is one *uhronomus* (over-leader) with 10 HD, having the abilities of both a psionicist and cleric, a magical weapon, and 1d4 other magical objects at his disposal.

Ecology: Dwarves dwell in virtually all types of terrain on Athas. Dwarven communities rarely grow larger than 100-200 individuals, the total of a dozen or so honor-bound extended families. The location in which a dwarven community springs up is dependent upon the focus of its founder.

Half-giant, Athasian

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any land
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary or community
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5-7)
TREASURE:	Varies
ALIGNMENT:	Varies; see below
NO. APPEARING:	1 (1d4+1) or 4d10
ARMOR CLASS:	10
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	3+12
THAC0:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d6 or by weapon type
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	H (13' tall)
MORALE:	Steady (11-12)
XP VALUE:	Normal 120, Chieftain 975, Leader 270, Psionicist 2,000
PSIONICS:	Varies

Half-giants are a race of enormous demihumans who have adapted to a variety of lifestyles in the many harsh terrains of Athas. The origins of the race are unclear. While it is known that the race is spawned from the union of human and giant and the nature of that union was certainly magical, its original purpose is unknown. Left to themselves, the original half-giants have multiplied, especially near the shores of the Silt Sea.

Standing 10'-12' tall, a single half-giant weighs approximately 1,600 lbs. It is an immensely powerful creature nearly as agile as its human forebears. Its facial features are human, but locked into a naturally dour, even menacing expression. A half-giant's thick hair is often braided, especially among the women, or kept in a single tail behind the head and down the back. Clothing varies with occupation and climate, though leggings with leather shoulder harnesses are common.

Half-giants communicate through speech, and most can speak the Common tongue. They also have their own language which, to human ears, seems very slow and drawn out, and translations are riddled with redundancies and seemingly unnecessary adjectives. No matter what the tongue, the half-giant's voice is pitched very low and sometimes difficult to understand.

Combat: Great size alone makes a half-giant a formidable warrior. One can strike bare-handed for 1d6 hp damage or may employ a weapon. Any successful weapon attack receives a +4 bonus to damage because of the half-giant's great strength.

There is a 25% chance that any half-giant will have a psionic wild talent. The nature of the wild talent should be determined as described in the *Complete Psionics Handbook*.

When encountered in a community, there will be one leader for every 10 half-giants (round fractions down). Leaders have 5+20 HD, THAC0 15, AC 8, and can make two bare-handed or weapon attacks per round. In communities where there are 30 or more half-giants, there are also one chieftain and one psionicist; Both have 7+28 HD, THAC0 13, AC 8, and can make two attacks per round. The psionicist will be level 3-6 (1d4+2); determine his powers according to the *Complete Psionics Handbook*.

Habitat/Society: Half-giants are found all over Athas. Their size and strength make them sought after as guards and brute warriors. However, they collect into communities of their own as well, often adopting the culture and customs of those other crea-



tures that are nearby. As a very young race, half-giants have little cultural identity of their own, instead clinging to customs and lifestyles that appear to be successful for other races.

Half-giants are subject to rather rapid and often inconvenient changes of alignment. This tendency makes them very hard to deal with on any but the shortest term. When first encountered, an individual or group's attitudes toward law and good must be determined (roll 1d6 twice; 1-2 = lawful, 3-5 = neutral, 6 = chaotic; 1-2 = good, 3-5 = neutral, 6 = evil). Then determine which of the two is fixed (roll 1d6; 1-3 = attitude toward law and chaos is fixed, 4-6 = attitude toward good and evil is fixed). The other attitude may change according to the situation. If the PCs remain in contact with the half-giants and are generally prosperous and successful, the floating attitude may gravitate toward that of the adventurers. However, there is no guarantee, and half-giants may make radical attitude changes that affect the situation quickly and without warning. All personal items, such as clothes, armor, weapons, food, etc., cost double for half-giant characters. Transportation and lodging are also considerably more expensive when they are available at all. In areas not dominated by half-giants, things such as buildings, furniture, wagons, boats, etc. aren't made to support their weight. Even in cities, they tend to camp outside to avoid destroying things.

Ecology: A half-giant derives his great size from his giant heritage, though he is also cursed with the marked stupidity of that line. The cynical nature of his giant half, however, is tempered by his human background, which gives him a greater interest in communication and cooperation. Half-giants are far more kind than their tyrannical, bloodthirsty giant kin. A half-giant is naturally curious and gentle (though that attitude can swing back and forth with its alignment).

Half-giants are capable of reproduction; a female can give birth to a single infant once per year; twins and triplets are rare. A half-giant's maximum lifespan is around 220 years.

Elf, Athasian

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Any land
FREQUENCY: Common
ORGANIZATION: Clan
ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any
DIET: Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE: Average (8-10)
TREASURE: Varies
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic neutral

NO. APPEARING: 3d10
ARMOR CLASS: 6 (10)
MOVEMENT: 12
HIT DICE: 1
THAC0: 19
NO. OF ATTACKS: 1
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d2 or by weapon type
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Surprise foes
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Nil
SIZE: M (7' tall)
MORALE: Average (8-10)
XP VALUE: Normal 35
PSIONICS: Varies

The dunes and steppes of Athas are home to thousands of tribes of nomadic elves. While each tribe is very different culturally, the elves within them remain a race of long-limbed sprinters given to theft, raiding, and warfare.

An Athasian elf stands 6½-7½' tall. They are slender, lean, and generally in terrific physical condition. Their features are deeply etched into their weather-toughened faces, and their skin is made rough by the windblown sands and baking sun of the wilderness. Elves typically dress to survive in the desert environment. Even when at an oasis or in a city, elves tend to prefer their native garb, designed to wrap the wearer against the brutality of the elements. Infravision enables elves to see up to 60' in darkness.

The elven language is one of short, clipped words. It has a rapid staccato pace and is difficult for novices to pick up. Elves are often forced to speak very slowly when conversing with those who are not native speakers of their language.

Combat: Elves are lightning fast in combat, a fact reflected in their lower armor class. Their reflexes make them dangerous enemies, and their savage nature shows itself in their brutal battle plans. Even an unarmed and outnumbered elf will fight like a wild animal when cornered and provoked.

Elves prefer long, slender weapons; swords and pole arms are favorites. Typically, an elf's weapon inflict 1d6 hp damage, although the material from which it is built will have some effect on that. No elf weapon will be cumbersome or heavy, however, for they value mobility in combat more than strength of attack. An ancient elven fable, roughly translated, tells the story of an elf who could strike three times with his lighter weapons before his enemies were aware that he was present. This philosophy is reflected in all elven attacks.

Elves are masterful warriors, naturally skilled in the use of their long bows and long swords. Elves gain a bonus of +1 to their attack rolls with these weapons, but only with those weapons of native tribal make and design. In order to qualify for this bonus, a weapon must be crafted by members of the elf's tribe; no other will do.

Elves gain a bonus to surprise opponents when in the wilderness or wastes of Athas. In desert or steppe encounters, when an elf or party of elves approaches a nonelven group, opponents suffer a penalty of -4 to their surprise rolls. Elven raiders often make use of this ability to stage ambushes and set traps for unwary travellers.



Habitat/Society: Elves are all brethren within each tribe, but they regard all outsiders as potential enemies. There is no racial unity among the elves. An elf from outside the tribe is just as much a foe as a human, halfling, or thri-kreen. Acceptance of an outsider by an individual elf or tribe can be achieved, but trust develops only over time.

Individually, tribal elves are conditioned to run quickly over sandy and rocky terrain. An elf warrior can cross better than 50 miles per day. An elven war party on the move is a deadly force with endurance and maneuverability. Elves use no beasts of burden for personal transportation.

Ecology: While most elven tribes make their living through herding, some have turned to commerce and others to raiding. Elven traders are rightly considered the most capable on Athas. Not only can they barter and deal with a variety of races, they can move and protect their goods across the vast wilderness.

Half-elves: Elves and humans travel many of the same roads on Athas, so it is not at all unusual for children of mixed parentage to be born into the world. A half-elf is generally taller than a man and stouter than an elf, but based solely on his countenance a half-elf can pass for either an elf or a human.

Neither fully human nor elven, half-elves often never find acceptance with either race. Rarely do half-elves congregate in great enough numbers to form communities of their own, so they remain outsiders, forever wandering and without a people or land.

Halfling, Athasian

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Forest ridge
FREQUENCY:	Common
ORGANIZATION:	Tribe
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (11-12)
TREASURE:	Varies
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful neutral
NO. APPEARING:	3d10 (1)
ARMOR CLASS:	7 (10)
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	1
THAC0:	Normal 19 Hunter-chief 17 Forest-chief 15 Tribe-chief 11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d3 or by weapon type
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Special resistances
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	S (3'-4' tall)
MORALE:	Average (8-10)
XP VALUE:	65 Hunter-chief 175 Forest-chief 420 Tribe-chief 2,000
PSIONICS:	Varies

Beyond the Ringing Mountains are jungles that flourish even under the heat of the Dark Sun. This is the undisputed territory of the feral halflings.

A halfling is a very short humanoid, standing about 3½' in height. They are muscled and proportioned like humans, but they have the faces of wise and beautiful children. Halflings live to be as much as 120 years old and weigh 50-60 lbs.

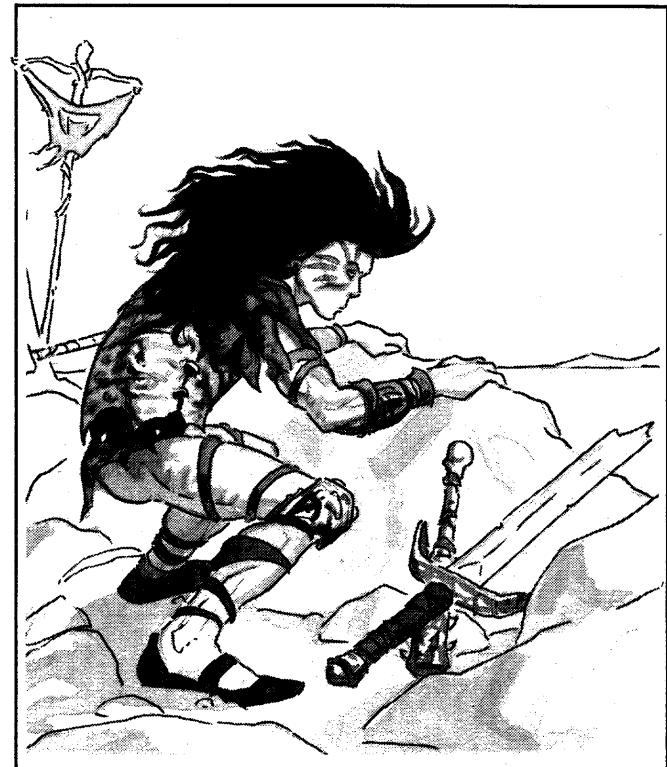
The halfling language is a collection of hoots, howls, shrieks, and cries that sounds very much like the constant chatter of the animals that share their forest domain with them. Thus, halflings lying in ambush of other creatures can often converse without fear that their words will be recognized by outsiders, who think them nothing more than the sounds of the untamed jungle.

Combat: Halflings look upon other demihuman and humanoid races as stock for the stew pot. They seldom show their enemies any respect in combat, resorting to what outsiders might call dirty tricks in order to overcome physically stronger foes.

Halfling weapons tend to be organic in nature, built mainly from the wood of the forests and the bones of its animals. They place a special value in weapons made from certain animals, believing that such arms will have an advantage in attacking other creatures of that type. Thus, a halfling heading out to explore a land frequented by elves might take along a dagger fashioned from the thigh bone of an elf. Most halfling weapons inflict only 1d4 or 1d6 hp damage. Halflings have a natural affinity for slings and thrown weapons, gaining a +1 bonus to their attack rolls when using such weapons.

Like dwarves, halflings naturally gain a +3 bonus to all saving throws against magical attacks, poisons, or disease. Individual halflings may have higher or lower bonuses as indicated by the DARK SUN rules book.

Habitat/Society: Halflings possess a great deal of racial unity. Though divided politically into separate villages and communities, halflings have a great respect for their race as a whole. Political differences between them are settled peaceably, under the



direction of their clerical leaders.

Halfling culture is fabulously diverse but difficult for other races to comprehend. A complete history of their culture, if such a thing existed, would present volume upon volume of complex social change, inspirational clerical leaders, and in-depth personal studies of the halfling and his duty to his jungle home. Conspicuous by their absence would be references to great wars of conquest or tremendous monetary wealth—the yardsticks by which other races measure cultural success. Halfling culture cares for the individuals inward being, his identity, and spiritual unity with his race and environment. Their culture does not provide for more traditional values, and vices such as greed and avarice are particularly discouraged.

Halfling villages tend to house a tribe of 20-200 residents. For every 10 halflings there is one hunter-chief who has 3 HD and psionic powers. For every 50 halflings there is a forest-chief who has 5 HD, with clerical or psionic powers. For every 100 halflings there is a tribe-chief who has 10 HD, clerical powers, and 1d3 magical items. Every tribe has a minimum of one tribe-chief, many of whom are also psionicists.

Ecology: Halflings greatly value the land around them and strive to avoid the ecological ruin that dominates the rest of Athas. Oddly, this view allows for the land to be disturbed and altered, even used for a halfling's own gain. However, halflings recognize that natural riches belong to the land and should never be moved away from the places where they are found.

Halflings are carnivores who view all other living creatures as potential meals. Similarly, they assume that others look upon them the same way. Thus, any friendship that a halfling forms with someone of another race is guarded, with the halfling always on the lookout to avoid a trap that might force him to end up as a meal for his companion.

Mul (half-dwarf)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any land (mainly urban)
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (8-10)
TREASURE:	Varies
ALIGNMENT:	Any neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	10
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	1+4
THAC0:	19
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d3 or by weapon type
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6'-7' tall)
MORALE:	Champion (15-16)
XP VALUE:	35
PSIONICS:	Varies

A mul is a powerful crossbreed of a human and dwarf. As a race, muls are unique in that they cannot reproduce; they are infertile for life and so have no family groups or communities that are purely mul. The individual mul, most often born into slavery on command of its parents' owner, is a naturally great warrior, bred for combat.

A mul gets what are, perhaps, the best attributes from each of its parents. From his human parent, he receives height and agility. From his dwarven parent, the mul gets incredible strength and endurance. At maturity, a mul stands as much as 6½' tall, weighing 240-300 lbs. Each is fair skinned, though sometimes tending toward a coppery coloration. A mul's eyebrow ridges are pronounced, and the ears are usually pointed toward the back of the head; otherwise, facial features are basically human. Regardless of sex, most muls are naturally bald, but those who aren't usually shave their heads as a mark of racial unity. Since many muls are born into gladiatorial careers, tattoos of decoration and ownership are common.

Being of mixed parentage, a mul is usually fluent in both Common and the dwarven language. It's not unusual, however, to find a mul who does most of his talking with his sword.

Combat: A mul's enhanced physical abilities make him a capable fighter. A mul can attack once per round with his fist, causing 1-3 hp damage, or he may attack with a weapon. Any weapon attack receives a +1 bonus to damage because of the mul's strength.

There is a 50% chance that any mul will have a psionic wild talent. The nature of the wild talent should be determined as described in the *Complete Psionics Handbook*.

A mul's endurance is well documented. A mul can exert himself for long periods of hard labor that would exhaust most other races. A mul can perform heavy labor, including stone construction, quarry work, running, or similar activities, for 24 hours without stopping. He can perform medium labor, including lighter construction, mining, climbing, or jogging, for 36 hours. Light labor, which includes combat training, walking unencumbered, or similar activities, can be undertaken for 48 continuous hours without stopping. If a mul paces himself to normal activities no more difficult than walking, he can continue without rest for up to 15 days. Regardless of the preceding type of exertion, eight hours of sleep will let a mul become fully rested, ready to begin work again. Of course, such exertion is tiring and uncomfortable for the mul, so all muls prefer a standard eight hours of



sleep per day unless there is an emergency that calls for long stretches of unbroken activity.

Habitat/Society: Muls are usually born into the slave pits of a noble house. Because muls are terrific warriors and laborers, they are in demand. When possible, owners call for the birth of muls among their slaves to swell their ranks.

In such instances, muls are usually taken away from their parents directly after birth, given instead to specialized wet nurses among the slaves. Often, a mul's parents have either died or been sold off before he is old enough to know them. Raised with adequate food and shelter, it can still be argued that they are raised with little love or affection, explaining their characteristic independence and gruff personalities.

Mul gladiators are perhaps the most prized slaves among slave owners. When they are in training, such muls are often pampered with the best food and accommodations available. As such, they are very expensive to maintain. It is a wealthy noble who can boast more than a few muls in his gladiatorial stable.

Muls are noted for retaining much of the stubbornness of their dwarven parent. In captivity, a mul who sets his mind on escape will generally succeed quickly or be killed or sold; handlers recognize their single-mindedness and seldom wish to fight it.

Those muls who have gained their freedom most often make their living as warriors. Independent mul priests and psionicists are not unheard of, however.

Ecology: Muls are born sterile. While they can and often do take mates and live in loving relationships, they can never have children of their own. The only way a mul can be born is to a mixed pair of dwarven and human parents. Even then, the risk to the mother is grave; large-boned mul babies are difficult to carry to term, and one in ten pregnancies results in the death of both mother and child. A mul can expect to live 85 years.

Thri-kreen, Athasian

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any land
FREQUENCY	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Constant
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (8-10)
TREASURE:	Varies
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic neutral
NO. APPEARING:	2d12
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	18
HIT DICE:	Larva 1+3, Child 2+3, Young 3+3, Young adult 4+3, Adult 5+3, Mature adult 6+3 Larva 19, Child/Young 17, Young adult/Adult 15, Mature adult 13
THAC0:	5 or 2
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1d4(x4)/1d4+1, or 1d4+1/by weapon
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	Paralyzation
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Missile dodge
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	L (11' long)
SIZE:	Fanatic (17-18)
MORALE:	Larva 65, Child 120, Young 175, Young adult 270, Adult 975, Mature adult 1,400
XP VALUE:	Varies
PSIONICS:	

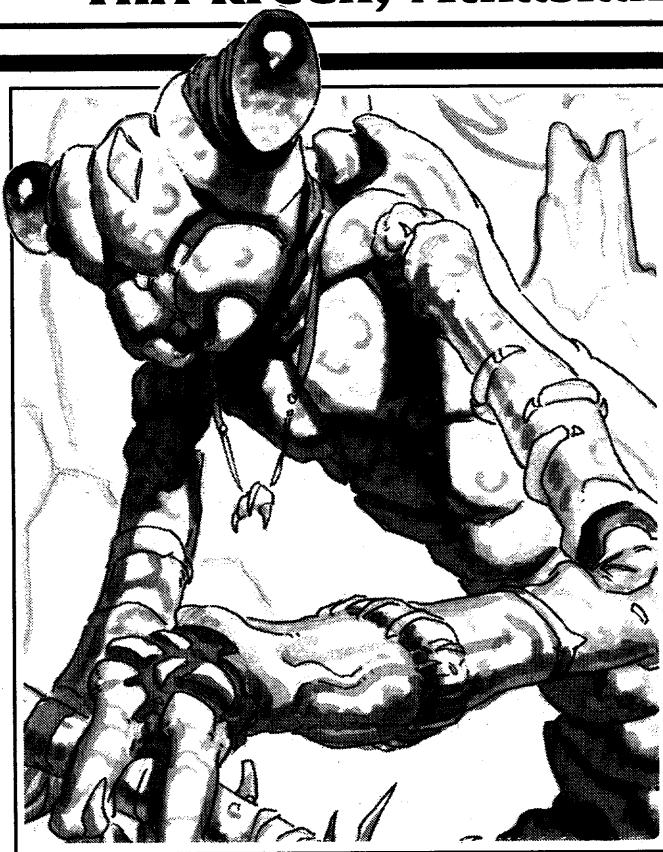
Thri-kreen are a race of insect men often referred to as "mantis warriors." Native to the harsh grasslands and deserts of Athas, thri-kreen have marked out nations for their hunting tribes.

Mature adult thri-kreen are roughly 7' tall at the shoulder and 11' long. Of the six limbs protruding from their midsection, two are used for walking; the other four end in four-fingered hands. The tough, sandy-yellow exoskeleton is extremely hard. A thri-kreen has two multifaceted, black eyes, two antennae, and a complicated jaw structure that manipulates food while it is being chewed. The antennae help the individual to maneuver through brush and grasslands in the darkness (they also serve to lessen any melee-combat penalty from darkness or blindness by 1 hp; missile combat is not affected). Thri-kreen often wear harnesses and even some forms of clothing, but they never wear armor.

The native thri-kreen language is made up of clicks and the grinding of its jaw appendages. While it is difficult for other creatures to speak this tongue, it is just as difficult for a thri-kreen to imitate more standard speech patterns. Thri-kreen speak their own language, but some understand the common tongue.

Combat: A thri-kreen's chitinous exoskeleton gives it AC 5 naturally. Unarmed, he can attack with four claws and one bite attack per round. Each claw strikes for 1d4 hp damage, and the bite inflicts 1d4+1 hp damage. If using a weapon, the thri-kreen can attack with its weapon and bite. A thri-kreen masters the use of the *chatkcha*, a crystal throwing wedge used by the race, when he becomes an adult. The chatkcha can be thrown up to 90 yards and will return to the thrower if it misses the target. When it hits, a chatkcha inflicts 1d6+2 hp damage. The *gythka*, a pole arm with a blade at either end, can slash for 1-6 hp damage against man-sized or smaller targets, or 1-10 hp damage against a larger target. The gythka can be thrown as a spear to inflict 1d6+2 hp damage.

An adult or mature adult thri-kreen also has a venomous saliva attack. Those struck by the thri-kreen's bite must save vs. paralyzation or be paralyzed. Smaller than man-sized creatures are paralyzed for 2d10 rounds, man-sized for 2d8 rounds, and larger



creatures for 1d8 rounds. Creatures classified as huge or gargantuan are affected for only one round.

Thri-kreen who are of age category "young" or older can leap up and forward astounding distances. These thri-kreen can leap 20' straight up or up to 50' forward. They cannot leap backward. Mature adult thri-kreen can dodge missiles fired at it on a roll of 9 or better on 1d20; these thri-kreen cannot dodge magical effects, only physical missiles. Magical physical missiles (arrows, thrown axes, etc.) modify this roll by their magical bonus.

There is a 50% chance that any thri-kreen will have a psionic wild talent, described in the *Complete Psionics Handbook*.

Thri-kreen can use most magical items, though those designed to be worn by demihumans will not function for a thri-kreen, because he cannot wear it properly. Unless otherwise stated, assume magical items are designed for use by demihumans.

Habitat/Society: Thri-kreen organize into hunting packs; there are no permanent thri-kreen communities. Packs range over wide territories that they call their own. When encountered in groups of eight or more, every even multiple of eight thri-kreen consist of two mature adults, two adults, one young adult, one young, one child, and one larva. All remaining thri-kreen in the group are mature adults.

Ecology: Thri-kreen are carnivores. They generally do not hunt other intelligent creatures for food, but will do so in times of need. The mantis warriors have a well-known taste for elves, which keeps both races at an uneasy peace at best.

Once hatched, thri-kreen start as larva and move one step through the life cycle per year. Larva and child thri-kreen can cause a maximum of 1 hp damage per attack. Young and young adult thri-kreen can cause a maximum of 3 hp damage per attack. Thri-kreen seldom live to more than 35 years.

Thri-kreen have no need of sleep. Thri-kreen characters can remain active through the day and night.

THE DAWN OF A NEW WORLD

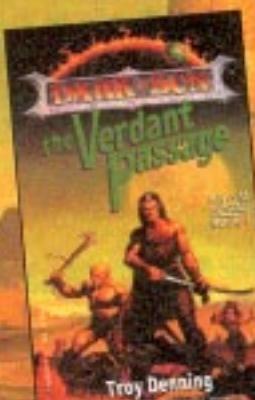
DARK·SUN

WORLD

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before them ...

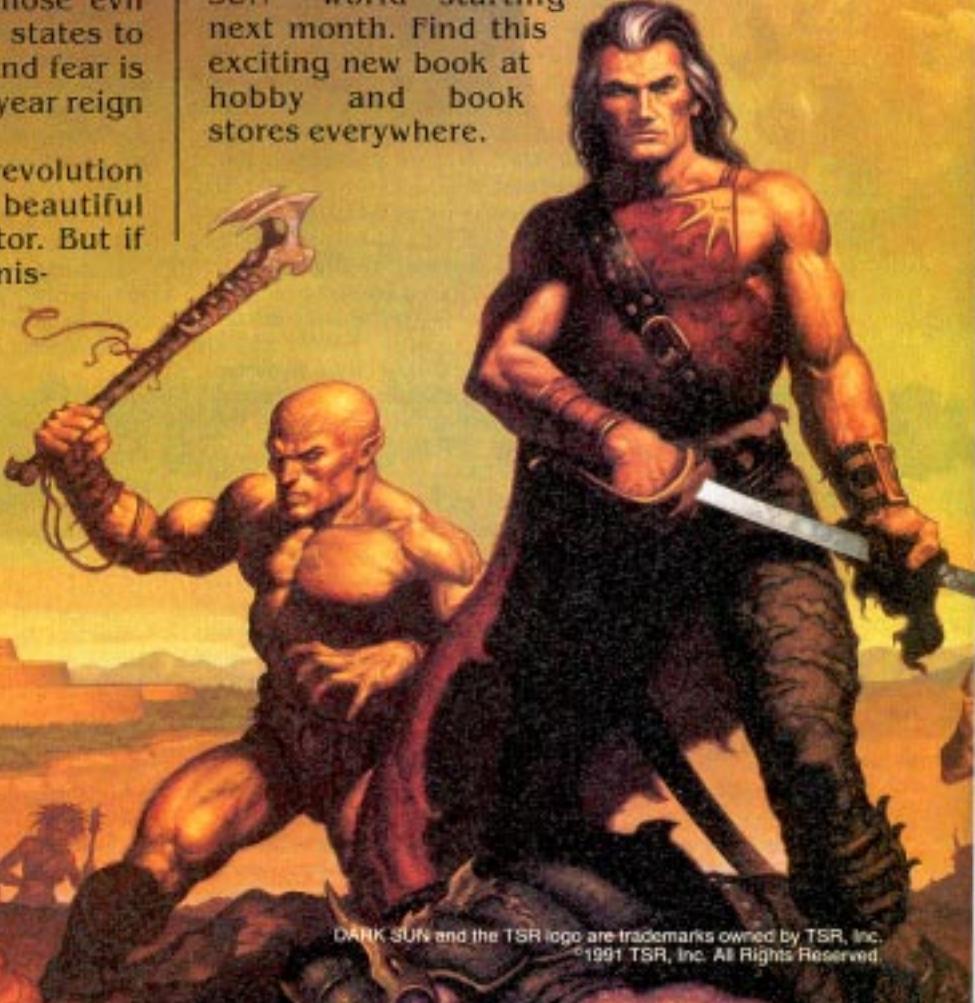
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A LETTER FROM the Wanderer

by Troy Denning

My beautiful niece, Tyra,

At your mother's behest, I am writing regarding your recent interest in necromancy. As I'm sure your investigations so far have revealed, it is a most ghastly and perilous field of study. Not only are the objects of your interest dangerous, unpredictable, and abominations of the natural order, the subject itself never fails to torment those who pursue it.

I have known necromancers to suffer the delusion that upon their passing, they themselves will suffer the terrible fate of undeath. Others believe that, save for themselves, the entire world is inhabited by undead disguised as living beings for the sole purpose of misleading them. A few scholars of the necromantic arts even become confused and mistake undeath for immortality, and actually aspire to this

condition upon their passing!

Quite rightly, your mother fears that your safety will be in grave danger if you pursue this inquiry any further. She has asked me to convince you to give up your studies in favor of the wealthy (if not handsome) husband she has chosen for you. Your mother also begs me to remind you that a suitable heir to the Merchant House of Orien will not be someone whose



mind has been corrupted by the study of necromancy.

I have no intention of doing as your mother asks. The study of the undead is a much-neglected field of endeavor on Athas, and one that holds more secrets to the history of our world than any other discipline. Despite the terrible danger to you, to say nothing of the stress it is sure to place on your young mind, I encourage you to pursue the study of undeath as far as your courage takes you.

Though my own knowledge of necromancy is limited, I have encountered a considerable number of undead during my travels. Herein, I have written down all that I know of these dissolute creatures, in the humble hope that it will serve both to further your knowledge and to help you guard against the unfortunate accidents that so often befall students of your field.

General nature

Intelligence: Obviously, the undead of Athas were at one time living beings. In my opinion, to be properly called undead, the subject must also have belonged to an intelligent species when it was alive. This species may have been classified as either an old or a new race, as long it was intelligent. I have met (and fled from) undead of the human, elven, dwarven, halfling, gith, half-giant, giant, mul, and baazrag races, among others. All were equally terrifying.

Of course, we have all encountered various animals roaming about long after they died, as well as mindless zombies and skeletons, but I believe that these are more properly called "walking dead" than "undead." "Walking dead" are either too obtuse to realize that they have died or, more often, are the tools of wicked sorcerers who have animated the unfortunates for their own nefarious purposes (something that I trust a lady of your integrity has no intention of doing). True undead have an intelligence and a will of their own—which, of course, makes them doubly dangerous.

Driving spirit: When a person dies, usually his spirit separates from the body and fades away. Some mystics and psionicists claim that the spirit "goes to the gray." I assume this is simply another way of saying it fades away. Having never died, I am not certain that my assumption is entirely correct, but it seems safe.

Sometimes, however, when a powerfully motivated person dies, his spirit does not perish. Instead, it either continues to reside in the dead body (most necromancers classify such as "corporeal"), or it separates from the body and does not fade away (in which case it is classified as "incorporeal").

This spirit refuses to accept its destruction. The body dies, but the spirit continues to strive after what it pursued in life. In essence, by an act of willpower, it defies death and enters a state that is neither life nor death.

In this state, the forces of nature seem

to affect the undead differently than living creatures. They rarely need food or water, and can withstand incredible temperature extremes. Often, they are unaffected by normal weapons, and blows that would destroy a living man merely slow them down. It is not unusual for them to be immune to certain types of magic or psionics, and the mere touch of an undead can be devastating to living flesh.

Unfortunately for living beings, their living state makes undead murderously jealous. Given the opportunity, most undead will attack an intelligent, living being upon sight, although they often leave unintelligent creatures alone. Even the most noble undead are short tempered and intolerant of living beings.

Uniqueness: No two undead are alike, any more than any two people are alike. Although certain undead may bear resemblances to each other and might even be categorized as the same type by students of necromancy, don't make the mistake of believing that they are the same.

Two elves, for example, may resemble each other to such an extent that only a member of their own tribe can tell them apart. However, one of them might be a powerful defiler, and the other might be an equally clever thief. Obviously, the two men will have very different powers, despite their surface similarities.

So it is with undead. The skills they learned in life stay with them in undeath. In life, one man may have been a psionicist and another a fighter. As undead, they might both be raaigs (described later herein), but the psionicist will still attack with his mind and the fighter with his weapons. They will have all the abilities they possessed in life, in addition to the powers their particular undead form bestows upon them.

Every undead creature is a distinctive being, with unique abilities based on its powers and skills in life. Like any free-willed, intelligent creature, it will have its own motivations and pursue its own ends after death.

Categories

Although each undead is a unique individual, they can be categorized according to general type in much the same way that men can be categorized according to whether they are elves, halflings, etc.

You will no doubt find that certain races tend to fall into certain categories of undead. From this, you may conclude that race is the sole factor in determining what kind of creature a being becomes upon passing. Do not make this mistake, as it will surely lead you down the path of error—and, hence, into peril.

From my experiences on Athas, the type of undead that a person becomes upon his demise depends upon the nature of the compulsion that prevented his spirit from "going to the gray," not upon what race he is. Of course, it cannot be denied that certain races have tendencies to fall into

certain categories of undead, but this is a reflection of normal racial proclivities toward common types of motivations and behaviors. No force, natural or supernatural, determines whether a member of a given race will become a certain type of undead.

Given this warning, then, here follows a discussion of the different categories of undead on Athas.

Skeletons and zombies: Skeletons and zombies are what I call "walking dead" rather than true undead. They have no intelligence and no independent will; they are always the servants of some other being and have simply been animated to serve his purposes. I mention them here only for the sake of completeness, and so that you will know to look for some more nefarious and powerful being lurking nearby when you encounter them. As general rule, skeletons and zombies tend to be man-sized or smaller, as it requires more energy to animate larger corpses. Of course, this does not rule out the possibility of running into a mekillot skeleton or a zombie giant. When this happens to you, as it certainly will during your studies, may I suggest a hasty retreat. Anything that can animate a giant must be very powerful indeed.

Thinking zombies: These are intelligent zombies and can usually be told from true zombies by the hateful spark burning in their eyes. They have only a semi-free will, however, due to the nature of their creation. Thinking zombies are formed when a creature dies while under some powerful compulsion to perform a given task (such as when under the influence of a *geas* or *quest* spell). Such a creature's spirit continues striving to complete the task assigned to it.

Thinking zombies are free to choose the strategy that they use to complete their quest and are sometimes quite creative in their approaches. They will never, under any circumstances, allow themselves to be diverted from their mission. Many thinking zombies are giants and half-giants, for their great size and strength makes these two races favorite targets for the sort of coercion that produces thinking zombies.

Faels: Faels are formed when a gluttonous person dies and his spirit still hungers for the excesses he knew during life. They often appear at feasts, parties, and other occasions where great amounts of food and drink are expected to be consumed. At first, they try to remain inconspicuous, though they are never far from the food table or the wine-cask.

As the evening progresses, they begin to drink more, eat more, and eventually begin chasing living beings away from the food and drink. Once the consumables are gone, they demand more of any living beings still present, attacking if the beings are unable to provide the food. Although it might seem that the best way to handle a fael is to let it eat itself to oblivion, this strategy never works. Faels have an infi-

nite capacity for consumption.

Obviously, many faels come from elven stock. This is why one of the most insulting things you can say to an elf is that he eats like a fael.

Raaigs: Raaigs are one of the most intriguing specialties of necromantic study. Along with meorties (told of later), they hold the distinction of being the most ancient of undead, and I believe they guard some of the most intriguing secrets of Athasian history. Without exception, all raaigs are thousands of years old. They are incorporeal spirits sustained by an unwavering and unshakable faith in their ancient gods—which, of course, no longer exist on Athas. Who can say what happened to these ancient deities? Did they ever exist? Did they die? Did they leave, or simply fade away as mortal spirits do now? This is one of the great secrets that necromancy stands to uncover.

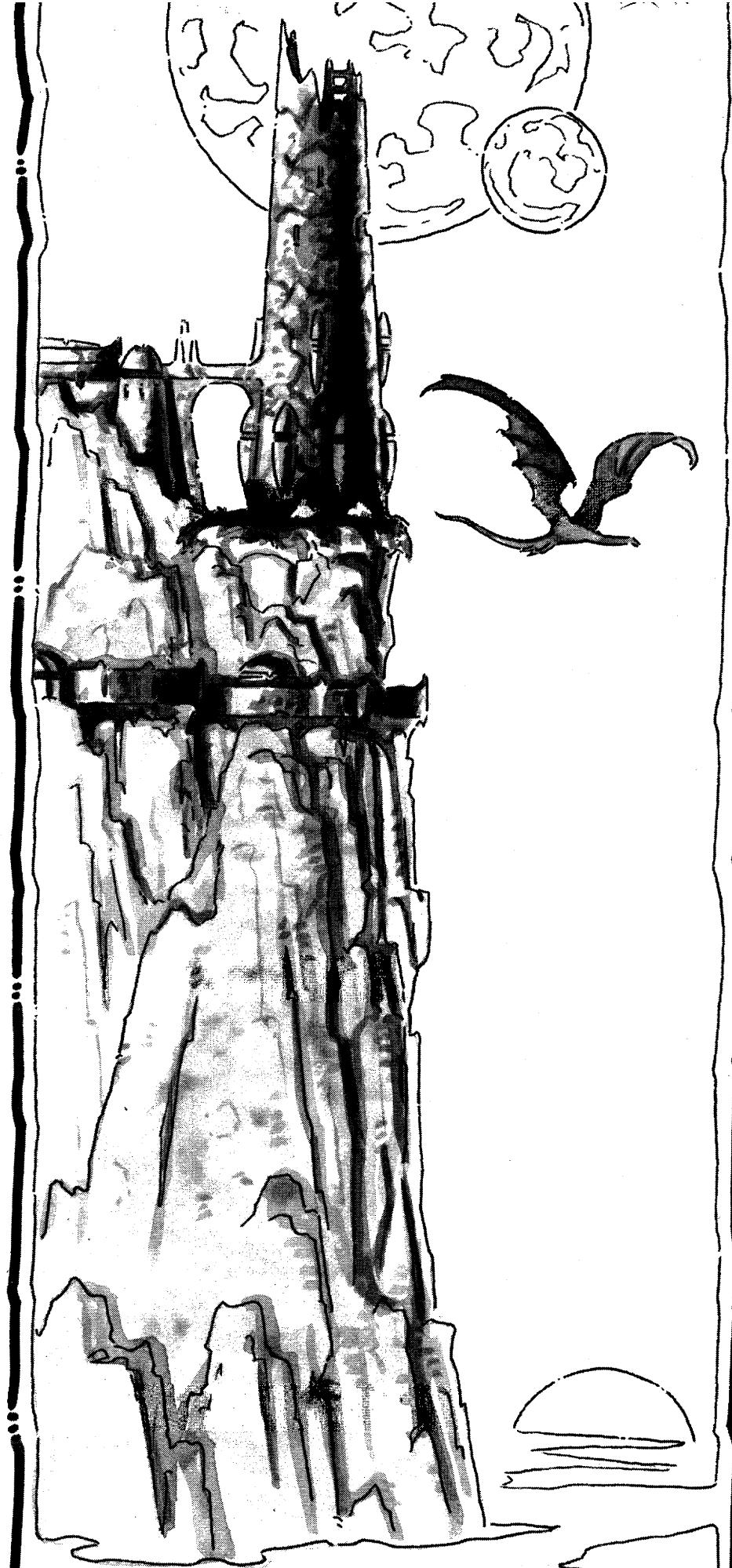
Raaigs are always found inside a shrine, be it an ancient stone building, a copse of woods, a deserted grotto, whatever. They are extremely uncommunicative and will permit only those whose moral character follows the precepts preached by their ancient, long-lost deity to enter their temples. Sometimes, a raaig may even deign to speak with such individuals, though only if the individuals somehow prove themselves exceptionally worthy. All others are turned away.

All raaigs are of the old races (human, elf, dwarf, giant, and halfling).

Meorties: Like raaigs, meorties are thousands of years old and provide an intriguing window into Athasian history. When a great king of the ancients died, his body was specially preserved with salts and limes; it may or may not have been swathed in cloth. It was then laid to rest in a secret crypt with vast amounts of treasure, so that the king might continue to watch over the welfare of his realm.

The spirits of such rulers continue to abide with their bodies, sustained by the duty with which they were charged upon death. Unfortunately, encounters with such meorties usually yield little historic information. Meorties emerge from their crypts only to avenge violation of the ancient laws governing their long-forgotten kingdoms. When one tracks you down, discussing history is the last thing on its mind.

I should note here that both the boundaries and the laws of these ancient kingdoms are mysteries to us. It is quite easy to incur a meorty's wrath for some action that seems perfectly innocent, such as cooking over a wood fire or taking a drink of water without spitting a mouthful on the ground. To make matters worse, that same action might bring no response a few miles away, when you cross the ancient border into some other lost kingdom. To avoid inadvertently offending these ancient kings, it is usually best to follow local customs that have developed in response to meorty attacks over many long



years. Generally, the stranger the custom, the more likely it is to reflect an ancient law that the local meorty is enforcing. (It has occurred to me that by carefully surveying these local customs, it might be possible to map out the borders of the ancient kingdoms. Perhaps this would be an area of interest to you, my dear.)

Finding a meorty in its crypt is even more hazardous than violating the lost laws of its kingdom. A meorty assumes that anyone entering its crypt is doing so for the express purpose of theft. Once a person has seen a meorty's crypt, the meorty will do all in its power to kill that person before he can reveal the location to another. In addition, anyone who manages to steal something from a crypt will be hunted down and punished. In general, you would be wise to confine your study of meorties to indirect methods.

All meorties are of the old races (human, elf, dwarf, giant, and halfling).

Racked spirit: Racked spirits are the incorporeal, tortured remnants of persons who committed an act that violated the basic nature of their character. Their guilty spirits cannot rest even after death. These tortured individuals are perhaps the most dangerous of all undead, for in their agony they have become so bitter and twisted that their only joy is destroying living, happy beings. The most common type of racked spirit, of course, is the dwarven banshee, created when a dwarf forsakes his life purpose.

Dhaot: Dhaots are incorporeal undead created when an individual with a powerful love of home or some other special place dies far away. When the body dies, the spirit is overwhelmed by a desire to return home. Unfortunately, the spirit's sense of the physical world becomes severely limited when separated from the body, and it often wanders the wastelands for years before finding its place.

Once it reaches its home, the dhaot finds it still cannot rest until the body it abandoned is also returned to the home. The dhaot chooses an individual with the ability to retrieve its lost body and harasses him until the bones have brought back. The desert is filled with the dhaots of halflings who died outside their beloved forests.

T'lizes: A t'liz is created when an extremely powerful defiler dies before completing his magical studies. The spirit lingers in his body, continuing his studies for centuries. T'lizes tend to be rare, since most defilers are hunted down and killed by sorcerer kings or the Veiled Alliance long before they reach a level high enough to become t'lizes. Strangely, t'lizes are a valuable source of information for historians and necromancers. They live for centuries (some since the time of the ancients) and are possessed of scholarly minds. Beware when dealing with t'lizes, however. As informative and polite as they may seem, they harbor no fondness for living beings. If a t'liz is cooperating with your studies, it is because doing so suits its own ends.

I hope that this information serves you well in your studies. Only you know what is best for you, though I do share some of your mother's anxiety regarding the dangers of your research. If you choose to pursue these interests, please heed my warnings and consider my direction. You could enrich the lives of us all with your discoveries, or fall prey to a monstrous evil of which no sane being would dare speak or imagine. In all events, I remain your fond uncle, and place my trust in your judgment.

Creating Athasian undead

As should be apparent from the Wanderer's letter, while the undead of the DARK SUN™ campaign bear a superficial relationship to the undead of other game settings, at their cores they are beasts of a different nature. Each one is a unique individual, striving for its own goals, motivated by individual desires that your characters might or might not understand. Remember, too, that the categories described by the Wanderer are based on how the undead creature came to be in its state, and have very little to do with the creature's current powers. No two meorties, for example, will be alike. One might resemble a conventional mummy in appearance and ability, and another might be closer to a conventional vampire.

To create undead for the DARK SUN

world, use the procedure below:

1. Treat DARK SUN world undead as fully detailed NPCs, not merely as creatures. Fill out a character sheet for each NPC describing him before he became an undead being, detailing everything you would for a normal NPC: race, sex, ability scores, character class, level, hit points, spells, psionics, etc.

2. Give your NPC a history. It doesn't need to be too detailed, just a name, an occupation, a general idea of where he lived, what he wanted out of life, and anything else you feel would help you understand him better.

3. Decide when and how the being died. If you are making a raraig or a meorty, your character must have lived 2,000 years ago or more. Otherwise, he could have died anywhere between 2,000 years and a few hours ago.

4. Consider the character's motivations in life and choose which kind of undead you think he would have become.

5. Give your creation some special undead powers. For low-level undead (1-5th level), one or two powers should be sufficient. For mid-level undead (6th-12th level), three or four powers should be good. Undead of 13th level and higher should have a minimum of five special undead powers, with an additional power for every five levels above 13th. Special undead powers might include such things as the following: immunity to all but metallic weapons, the ability to pass through solid objects, superheated touch that causes extra damage, the ability to drain life levels by touching a creature, the ability to transfer hit points from the victim to the creature, immunity to certain types of spells or psionics, the ability to cause *fear* or *darkness* at will, etc. Because each undead is unique, these powers can be anything you wish. For more ideas, you might look at the undead listed in the

Monstrous Compendium. You might also decide to give your undead some special vulnerabilities appropriate to his nature, such as suffering double damage from cold-based attacks, being paralyzed for 1d4 rounds by contact with a bronze weapon, being dispelled for 1d4 days if forced to look at its own reflection, etc.

Always remember that regardless of the extra powers granted to your undead creature, he retains all of the ability scores, class benefits, hit points, spells, psionic powers, etc., that he possessed as a living NPC.

6. Decide what your undead creature's current goals and ambitions are, based on his old personality and his new instincts as an undead.

7. Remember that all undead are affected normally by spells, turning, psionics, etc., as listed in the standard AD&D® rule books. (Although the Wanderer makes a distinction between "walking undead" and true undead, this has no effect in terms of the rules.)

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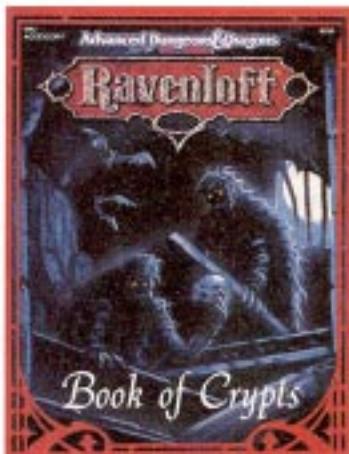
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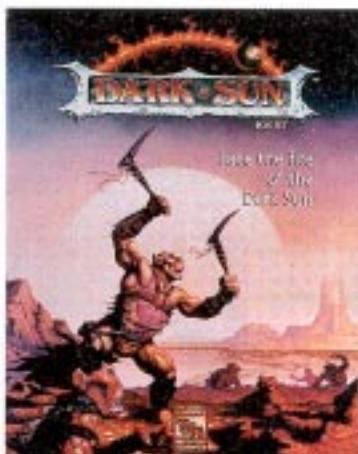
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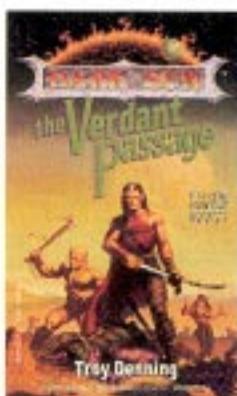
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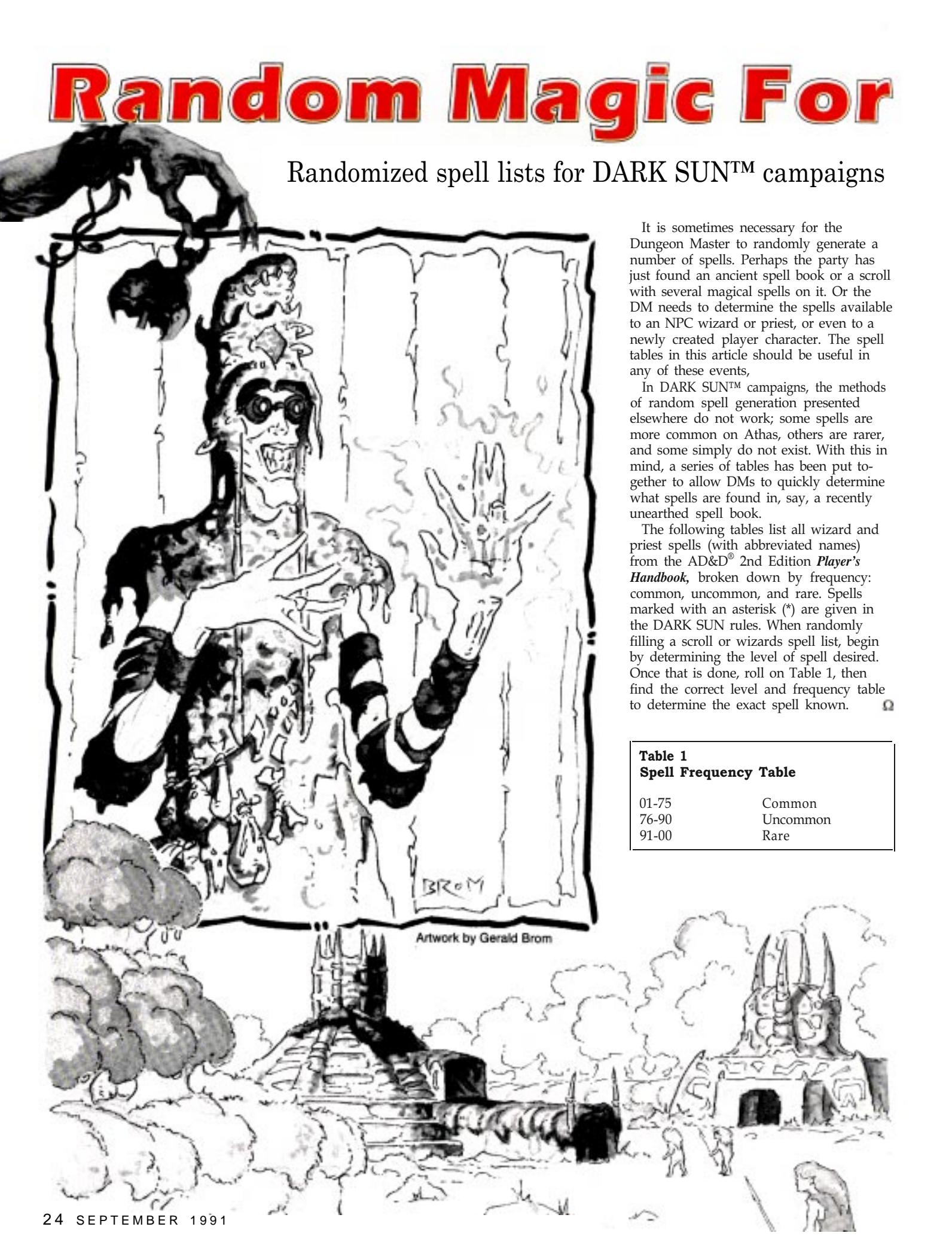
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Random Magic For

Randomized spell lists for DARK SUN™ campaigns



It is sometimes necessary for the Dungeon Master to randomly generate a number of spells. Perhaps the party has just found an ancient spell book or a scroll with several magical spells on it. Or the DM needs to determine the spells available to an NPC wizard or priest, or even to a newly created player character. The spell tables in this article should be useful in any of these events,

In DARK SUN™ campaigns, the methods of random spell generation presented elsewhere do not work; some spells are more common on Athas, others are rarer, and some simply do not exist. With this in mind, a series of tables has been put together to allow DMs to quickly determine what spells are found in, say, a recently unearthed spell book.

The following tables list all wizard and priest spells (with abbreviated names) from the AD&D® 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*, broken down by frequency: common, uncommon, and rare. Spells marked with an asterisk (*) are given in the DARK SUN rules. When randomly filling a scroll or wizards spell list, begin by determining the level of spell desired. Once that is done, roll on Table 1, then find the correct level and frequency table to determine the exact spell known. ☐

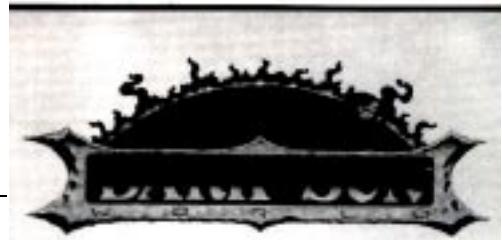
**Table 1
Spell Frequency Table**

01-75	Common
76-90	Uncommon
91-00	Rare

Artwork by Gerald Brom

Organized Minds

by Timothy B. Brown and William W. Connors



Wizard Spells

Table 2
First-Level Spells

Roll Common	Uncommon	Rare
1 Affect n. fires	Alarm	Color spray
2 Burning hands	Armor	Dancing lights
3 Change self	Audible glamor	Gaze reflect.
4 Charm person	Cantrip	Identify
5 Chill touch	Detect undead	Message
6 Erase	Comp. languages	N.'s magical aura
7 Detect magic	Find familiar	Ventriloquism
8 Enlarge	Grease	Wizard mark
9 Feather fall	Hypnotism	
10 Friends	Mending	
11 Hold portal	Shocking grasp	
12 Jump	Spider climb	
13 Magic missile	Spook	
14 Mount	Taunt	
15 Phant. force	Unseen servant	
16 Wall of fog	Prot. evil	
17 Read magic	Roll again	
18 Shield	Roll again	
19 Sleep	Roll again	
20 T.'s floating disc	Roll again	

Table 3
Second-Level Spells

Roll Common	Uncommon	Rare
1 After self	Bind	Blur
2 Blindness	Continual light	Fool's gold
3 Darkness, 15' r.	Deafness	Irritation
4 Deepockets	Detect invis.	L.'s trap
5 Detect evil	Fog cloud	Magic mouth
6 Detect psionics*	Glitterdust	Mirror image
7 ESP	Hypnotic pattern	Rope trick
8 Flaming sphere	Know alignment	Roll again
9 Forget	Melf's acid arrow	
10 Imp. phant. force	Misdirection	
11 Invis.	Prot. cantrips	
12 Knock	Ray of enfeeble.	
13 Levitate	Scare	
14 Locate object	Shatter	
15 Pyrotechnics	Spectral hand	
16 Strength	Stinking cloud	
17 Summon swarm	Wizard lock	
18 T.'s u.h. laughter	Roll again	
19 Web	Roll again	
20 Whispering wind	Roll again	

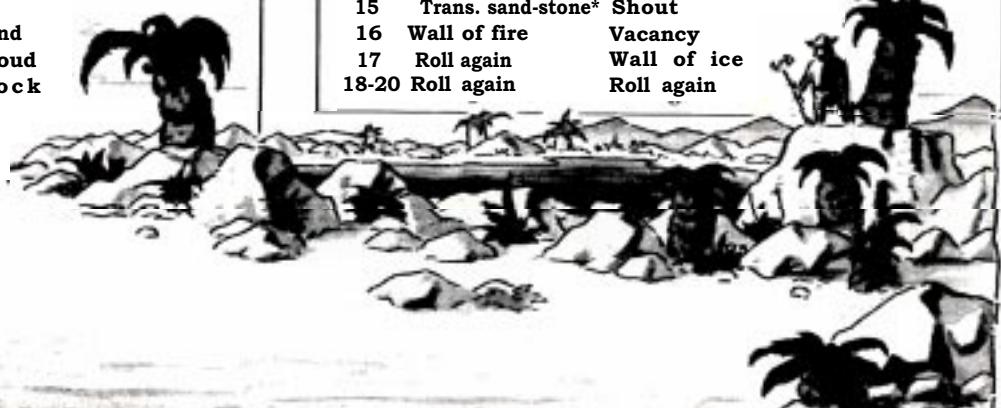


Table 4
Third-Level Spells

Roll Common	Uncommon	Rare
1 Clairaudience	Blink	Explosive runes
2 Clairvoyance	Delude	Illusionary script
3 Dispel magic	Feign death	Item
4 Fireball	Hold undead	Secret page
5 Flame arrow	Infravision	Sepia snake s.
6 Fleet feet*	L.'s tiny hut	Water breathing
7 Fly	Melf's minute meteors	
8 Haste	Monster sum. I	
9 Hold person	Phantom steed	
10 Invis., 10' R.	Prot. normal missiles	
11 Lightning bolt	Spectral force	
12 Non-detection	Suggestion	
13 Prot. evil, 10' r.	Vampiric touch	
14 Slow	Wind wall	
15 Tongues	Wraithform	
16-20 Roll again	Roll again	

Table 5
Fourth-Level Spells

Roll Common	Uncommon	Rare
1 Charm monster	Contagion	Detect scrying
2 Confusion	Dig	Enervation
3 D. door	E.'s b. tentacles	H. terrain
4 Enchanted weapon	Extension I	Illusionary wall
5 Fire charm	Fear	Magic mirror
6 Fire trap	Fumble	Rainbow pattern
7 Ice storm	Imp. invis.	R.'s m. enhancer
8 M. creation	L.'s secure shelter	Solid fog
9 M. globe of invul.	Massmorph	Wizard eye
10 Phant. killer	Monster sum. II	Roll again
11 Plant growth	O.'s resilient s.	
12 Psionic dampener*	Poly. other	
13 Raze*	Poly. self	
14 Stoneskin	Shadow monsters	
15 Trans. sand-stone*	Shout	
16 Wall of fire	Vacancy	
17 Roll again	Wall of ice	
18-20 Roll again	Roll again	

Table 6
Fifth-Level Spells

Roll	Common	Uncommon	Rare
1	Adv. illusion	Avoidance	Airy water
2	Animal growth	B.'s interposing hand	C. other plane
3	Animate dead	Conjure elemental	Dismissal
4	Chaos monsters	Demi-shadow	L.'s lam. belab.
5	Cloudkill	Distance distortion	Magic jar
6	Cone of cold	Dream	Sending
7	Domination	Extension II	Shadow door
8	Feeblemind	Fabricate	Wall of iron
9	Hold monster	False vision	
10	Major creation	L.'s secret chest	
11	M.'s faithful hound	Monster sum. II	
12	Rejuvenate*	Passwall	
13	Telekinesis	Seeming	
14	Teleport	Shadow magic	
15	Trans. rock-mud	Summon shadow	
16	Wall of stone	Wall of force	
17-20	Roll again	Roll again	

Table 8
Seventh-Level Spells

Roll	Common	Uncommon	Rare
1	Control undead	B.'s grasping hand	Banishment
2	Finger of death	Charm plants	Duo-dimension
3	Forcecage	Delayed blast fireball	Mass invis.
4	Limited wish	Doom legion*	M.'s mag. mansion
5	M.'s sword	D.'s instant summons	Sequester
6	Power word, stun	Monster sum. V	Vision
7	Spell turning	Phase door	
8	Teleport w/o error	Prismatic spray	
9	Vanish	Reverse gravity	
10	Roll again	Shadow walk	
11		Simulacrum	
12		Statue	

Table 9
Eighth-Level Spells

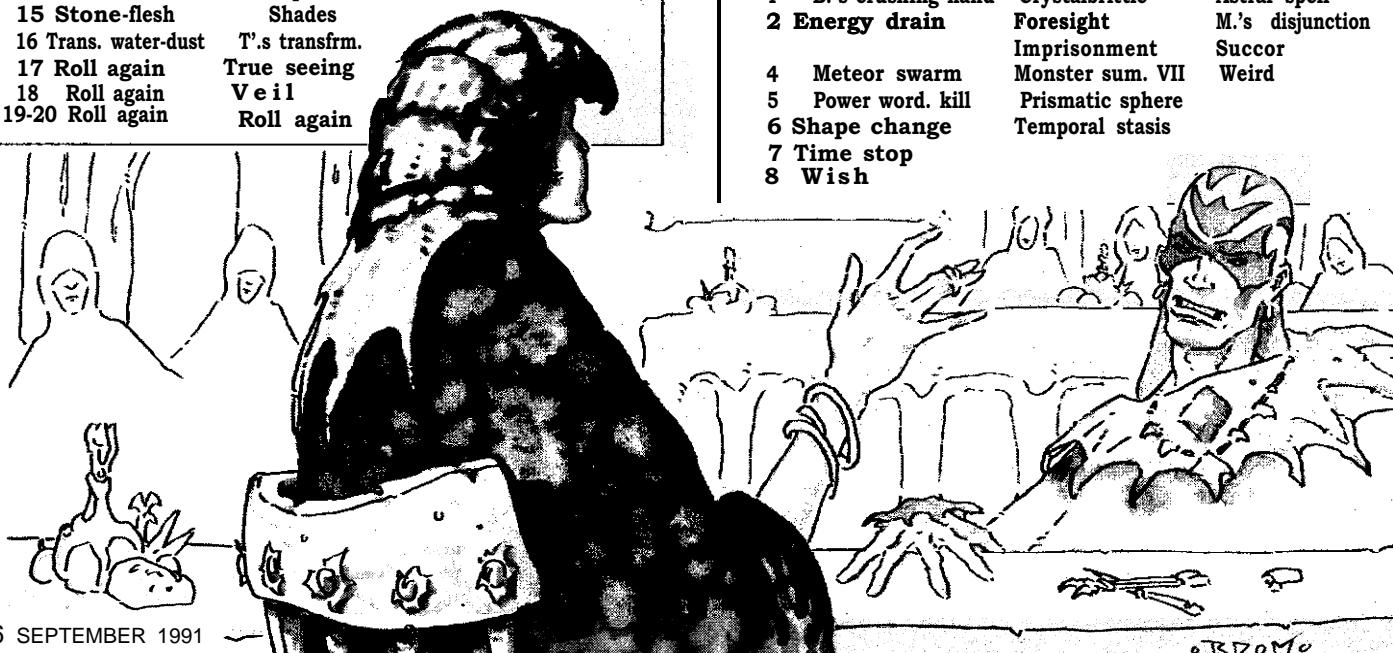
Roll	Common	Uncommon	Rare
1	B.'s clenched fist	Antipathy-sympathy	Clone
2	Glassteel	Binding	Demand
3	Incendiary cloud	Create tree of life*	Symbol
4	Mass charm	Maze	Trap the soul
5	Mindblank	Monster sum. VI	
6	Permanency	O.'s telekin. s.	
7	Poly. any object	Otto's irres. dance	
8	Power word, blind	Prismatic wall	
9	Serten's spell	Screen	
	immunity		
10	Roll again	Sink	

Table 10
Ninth-Level Spells

Roll	Common	Uncommon	Rare
1	B.'s crushing hand	Crystalbrittle	Astral spell
2	Energy drain	Foresight	M.'s disjunction
4	Meteor swarm	Imprisonment	Succor
5	Power word, kill	Monster sum. VII	Weird
6	Shape change	Prismatic sphere	
7	Time stop	Temporal stasis	
8	Wish		

Table 7
Sixth-Level Spells

Roll	Common	Uncommon	Rare
1	Anti-magic shell	B.'s forceful hand	Enchant an item
2	Chain lightning	Contingency	Geas
3	Conjure animals	Death fog	Legend lore
4	Control weather	Demi-shadow	Lower water
		magic	
5	Deathspell	Ensnaresment	Part water
6	Disintegrate	Extension III	Reincarnation
7	Globe of invul.	Eyebite	
8	Guards and wards	Glasses	
9	Invisible stalker	Mislead	
10	Mass suggestion	Monster sum. IV	
11	Mirage arcana	M.'s lucubration	
12	Move earth	Programmed illusion	
13	O.'s freezing s.	Project image	
14	Permanent illusion	Repulsion	
15	Stone-flesh	Shades	
16	Trans. water-dust	T.'s transfrm.	
17	Roll again	True seeing	
18	Roll again	Veil	
19-20	Roll again	Roll again	



Priest Spells

Table 11
First-Level Spells

Roll Common	Uncommon	Rare
1 Animal friendship	Bless	Combine
2 Create water	Command	Detect snares & pits
3 Cure light wnds.	Detect evil	Invis.-undead
4 Detect magic	Entangle	Shillelagh
5 Detect poison	Faerie fire	
6 Endure heat/cold	Invis.-animals	
7 Merciful shadows*	Light	
8 Prot. evil	Locate animals/plants	
9 Purify food & drink	Magical stone	
10 Roll again	Pass w/o trace	
11	Remove fear	
12	Sanctuary	

Table 13
Third-Level Spells

Roll Common	Uncommon	Rare
1 Air lens*	Call lightning	Cure blind./deaf.
2 Animate dead	Continual light	Feign death
3 Create food & water	Cure disease	Neg. plane prot.
4 Dispel magic	Hold animal	Remove curse
5 Flame walk	Magical vestment	Remove paralysis
6 Glyph of warding	Snare	Starshine
7 Locate object	Speak w/ dead	Water breathing
8 Meld into stone	Spike growth	Water walk
9 Plant growth	Tree	
10 Prayer	Roll again	
11 Prot. fire		
12 Pyrotechnics		
13 Stone shape		
14 Summon insects		
15+ Roll again		

Table 12
Second-Level Spells

Roll Common	Uncommon	Rare
1 Aid	Chant	Augury.
2 Barkskin	Enthrall	Detect charm
3 Charm person/mammal	Find traps	Heat metal
4 Dust devil	Goodberry	Messenger
5 Fire trap	Know alignment	Withdraw
6 Flame blade	Obscurement	Roll again
7 Hold person	Silence, 15' r.	
8 Produce flame	Trip	
9 Resist fire/cold	Warp wood	
10 Slow poison	Wyvern watch	
11 Snake charm		
12 Speak w/ animals		
13 Spiritual hammer		
14+ Roll again		

Table 14
Fourth-Level Spells

Roll Common	Uncommon	Rare
1 Animal sum. I	Call woodland beings	Abjure
2 Cloak of bravery	Detect lie	Free action
3 Control temp., 10' r.	Divination	Hold plant
4 Cure serious wnds.	Halluc. terrain	Lower water
5 Giant insect	Imbue w/ spell ability	Reflecting pool
6 Neutralize poison	Plant door	Roll again
7 Produce fire	Prot. lightning	
8 Prot. evil, 10' r.	Speak w/ plants	
9 Rejuvenate*	Spell immunity	
10 Repel insects	Tongues	
11 Sticks-snakes		
12 Roll again		



Table 15
Fifth-Level Spells

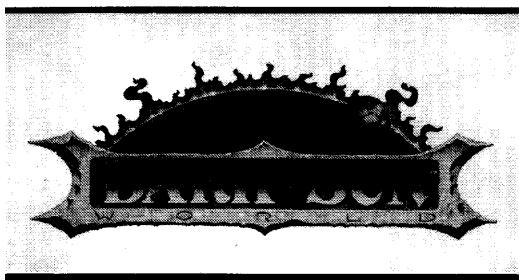
Roll	Common	Uncommon	Rare
1	Air walk	Anti-plant shell	Atonement
2	Animal growth	Commune	Magic font
3	Animal sum. II	Commune w/ nature	Plane shift
4	Conjure elemental*	Moonbeam	Quest
5	Control winds	Pass plant	Raise dead
6	Cure critical wnds.	Rainbow	Roll again
7	Dispel evil	Spike stones	
8	Flame strike	True seeing	
9	Insect plague		
10	Sandstorm*		
11	Trans. rock-mud		
12	Wall of fire		

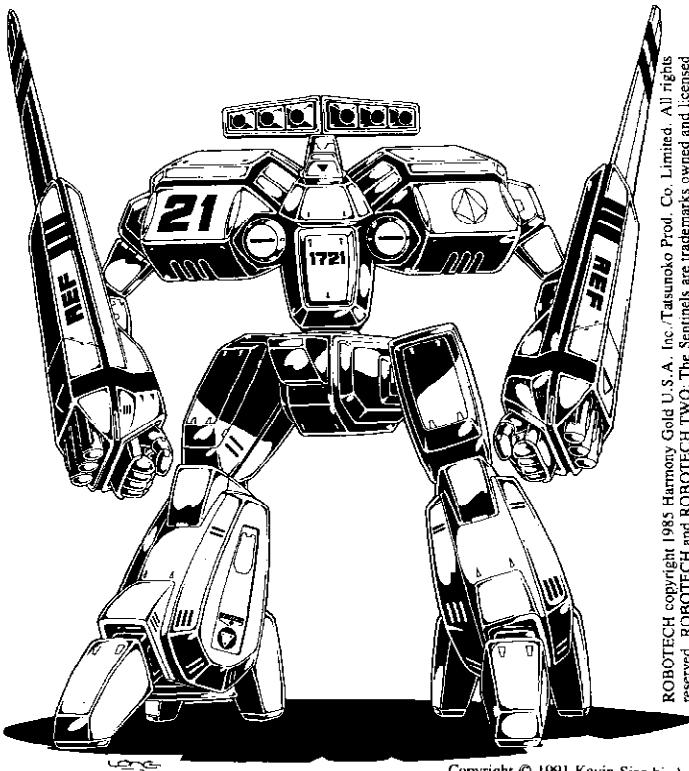
Table 17
Seventh-Level Spells

Roll	Common	Uncommon	Rare
1	Animate rock	Creeping doom	Astral spell
2	Changestaff	Holy word	Chariot of Sustarre
3	Confusion	Restoration	Exaction
4	Control weather	Succor	Gate
5	Earthquake	Symbol	Resurrection
6	Fire storm	Roll again	Trans. metal-wood
7	Regenerate		
8	Reincarnate		
9	Sunray		
10	Wind walk		

Table 16
Sixth-Level Spells

Roll	Common	Uncommon	Rare
1	Aerial servant	Anti-animal shell	Forbiddance
2	Animal sum. III	Conjure animals	Part water
3	Animate object	Create tree of life*	Transport via plants
4	Blade barrier	Fire seeds	Turn wood
5	Find the path	Heroes' feast	
6	Heal	Liveoak	
7	Speak w/ monsters	Stone tell	
8	Trans. water-dust	Word of recall	
9	Wall of thorns		
10	Weather sum.		





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A wizard's staff is to lean on

by Ed Greenwood

"I've noticed a certain tendency," Elminster said dryly, "to speak—in your world, that is—only of mages whose Art is mighty indeed. Those who can reshape All That Is with but one wave of a finger . . . like myself, for instance."

The old mage almost smiled for a moment. Then he frowned at me, fiercely. "This tendency is natural, but it must be tempered by an occasional glance or two at wizards of lesser power. 'Tis they who will wield power in years to come! 'Tis they who are the more numerous and the more in need of attention. So heed ye."

Elminster turned in his chair and waved one hand in an intricate pattern. There was a flash, and an instant later he was holding a staff that had not been there before. He raised its smooth wooden length until one end pointed in my direction, then raised his eyebrows.

There was a click beside me, as my ready tape recorder began to record all by itself. Elminster did smile this time. "I thought it would work." He nodded with satisfaction and set the staff down as he indicated his empty glass.

As I rose to fill it, he leaned toward my machine and began to speak. And so I learned much more of fledgling mage-craft in the Forgotten Realms, including details of a dozen magical staves whose powers are useful but more limited than those hitherto known. These I've described hereafter, with their AD&D® game statistics. Elminster tells me that all appear as plain wooden walking-staves, are usable by all sorts of wizards only (unless otherwise noted), and are fairly numerous in Faerun.

As a reminder, magical staves usually have $19+1d6$ charges when found. Most are about 5'-6" long, 1"-1½" in diameter, and made of wood. Spell effects, unless otherwise stated, are at the 8th level of ability.

Rilantaver's staff

The elusive trickster Rilantaver long ago vanished from his usual haunts around the Sea of Fallen Stars and is believed to have perished in some misadventure. Elminster suspects he merely decided to make his home on some other plane of existence. His legacy to Art in the Realms includes some spells (of spectacular effect but minor power) and the process of making the sort of staff named for him. Many were made in Amn and Starmantle, where Rilantaver ran a business of sorts to fund his carefree travels and shady pursuits.

A Rilantaver's staff affords +3 protection on saving throws and armor class for up to six beings touching it. This power is

BAZAAR OF the BIZARRE

automatic and drains no charges.

Upon command, the staff can *detect magic* in a 20'-radius sphere centered on the staff. The staff bearer can clearly see magical auras, but the staff does not enable others not touching it to do so. No charges are so drained.

The bearer can also exercise *telekinesis* on any object touched by the staff. This function must be exercised as the touch is made, is activated and ended by silent force of will, and drains three charges, plus one charge per round after the round of activation. Moving creatures and objects require a successful attack roll to be touched, and any living, conscious, unwilling creature receives a saving throw vs. spells each round to break free of the power. *Telekinesis* is identical in effect to the fifth-level wizard's spell, but the staff's weight limit is 1,000 lbs. Once telekinetic control over an object or creature is lost, it cannot be regained except by touching the target again and reactivating the power.

XP Value 3,000

Staff of battle

This staff is a +3 weapon that cannot be cut by any blade. Its magical speed enables its bearer to strike first in any round, and it attracts all missiles (even *magic missiles*) passing within 10' of any part of it. Such missiles avoid striking any living being but touch the staff and are absorbed harmlessly. If a *staff of battle*'s attack roll (adjusted with its bonus) is 20 or greater, any armed opponent that it strikes must make a successful dexterity check on 4d6 or be disarmed, the opponent's weapon flying out of immediate reach (10+1d10 feet

away). These functions are all automatic and continuous, and do not drain charges.

A *staff of battle* can repel (as per the sixth-level wizard spell *repulsion*) all creatures within 10'. This power drains two charges per use and can be exercised only once every six rounds. The *repulsion* lasts for only two rounds, after which affected creatures are free to return.

Once per day (144 turns), a staff bearer can designate any successful hit to be a "thunderstrike." The decision must be made immediately upon the staff's striking of its target, and the blow instantly drains eight charges from the staff (insufficient charges will produce no result). A "thunderstrike" can be heard as a deep, booming noise; it is a magical force sufficient to deal double damage to any opponent of man-size or smaller (no saving throw) and triple damage to all larger creatures. Any creature struck must make a successful dexterity check on 1d20 to avoid being thrown to the ground, and also make a successful strength check on 1d20 or be *stunned* for 1-3 rounds. If *stunned*, the victim reels helplessly; gains a -3 penalty to his armor class; is unable to attack, cast spells, or concentrate; and is liable to drop any held weapons or other objects unless a dexterity check on 1d20 is made for each.

If used against nonliving objects, a "thunderstrike" does one point of structural damage and forces any object struck (e.g., a door, sword, shield, or armor) to save vs. crushing blow at a -3 penalty or be crushed or shattered.

XP Value 1,000

Staff of displacement

This magical staff functions at all times as a *cloak of displacement* when up to three beings hold it. This +2 protection functions continuously and drains no charges.

The staff can also, upon command (a silent act of will not requiring a gesture or utterance), enable a single creature grasping the staff to *jump*, as per the first-level wizard spell. This function drains one charge and may be activated as often as desired, once per round.

The staff can also, by touch, part water in a 5' cylinder. This cylinder is centered on the staff and extends 4' beyond either end of it, enabling beings to breathe air while submerged. Magical processes replenish the air continuously to keep it fresh and drain one charge per round from the staff while performing this function. This function requires the utterance of a secret command word to activate the staff. The function ceases upon the mental command of any being grasping the staff, and it may be used as often as desired.

Finally, all *staves of displacement* can temporarily negate (but not destroy) *wizard locks* and *hold portal* spells, regardless of the level of the being who cast them. The touch of the staff causes the guarded door or portal to glow with a faint radiance for 1d4 rounds; during this time, all creatures who wish to do so may pass freely through the guarded area. When this "free passage" ceases, any creatures caught passing through the guarded area may proceed but must suffer a system-shock roll. This function operates automatically, whether passage is desired or not.

and drains one charge per level of the caster of the *hold portal* or *wizard lock*.
XP Value 6,000

Staff of divergence

This staff is a defensive weapon. Upon its crafting, this staff must be set to guard against one type of attack (typically fire or lightning). It is effective against only the chosen type of attack, of both natural and magical origin, regardless of the attacks intensity.

Any attack of the chosen type directed within 9' of any part of a *staff of divergence* is automatically turned away to a spot or target within 90', as chosen by the staff bearer. If no one is holding the staff, or the bearer does not choose a destination for the attack, determine where the attack takes effect using random methods. This function of the staff drains three charges per use, and can be used only six times in any 24-hour (144-turn) period.

Divergence is effective against spells and magical item discharges employing the attack form guarded against, but it cannot guard against "all spells" or "all poisons." It could be crafted to ward off "all acids," but all flaming attacks and all electrical/energy discharge attacks are by far the most common attack types guarded against by such staves.

A *staff of divergence* has an additional power, usable at will and requiring no charges. It can emit a *faerie fire* radiance of any hue desired. The staff must be held to change the intensity and color of the radiance or to end it. These processes require concentration that precludes spell-casting for each round of change.

XP Value 1,000

Staff of miracles

These mages' staves were once common, being made in Myth Drannor and elsewhere, but few know the secrets of their crafting today. When grasped and ordered, such a staff glows with a brief blue-white radiance and allows a +4 bonus on saving throws for up to four beings touching it. This protection lasts for the round in which the staff is touched and the following round, and drains the staff of four charges each time this power is activated.

A *staff of miracles* may *heal* (as the sixth-level priest spell) once every 24 hours. This function drains five charges.

The staff may also be used to *delay* death once every 24 hours. This function, which drains six charges, is similar to the *death's door* spell from the AD&D 1st Edition tome, *Unearthed Arcana*, and permits a "dead" being, if touched within three rounds of "death," to be brought to 1 hp, despite any wounds, dismemberments, or even decapitation. Breathing, bleeding, and all life functions are magically halted for seven turns; if curative magic or other means are applied to the unfortunate being during this time, actual death may be averted. A system-shock roll may apply if the DM judges it appropriate in some cases.

Once every 66 days, a *staff of miracles* allows the bearer one *limited wish*, at a cost of 12 charges (insufficient charges will cause failure of function). When this function is used, a roll of thunder will be heard overhead. The staff bearer is not aged by use of this power of the staff. The *limited wish* is akin to the seventh-level wizard spell. If death is involved, it cannot be directly caused by the spell, and it can only be undone or reversed for one creature. If the *limited wish* involves the undoing of acts, spells cast, words said, etc., it can only reach back into the immediate past to a maximum of one turn.

XP Value 4,000

Staff of night

A *staff of night* is not (despite folk beliefs to the contrary) an evil item; like all the staves detailed herein, it has no alignment. Anyone grasping this staff is automatically afforded infravision to a range of 90'. By wordless mental command (at a cost of one charge), this staff can dispel any magical spell radiance whose area of effect it contacts (e.g., *light*, *continual light*, or *faerie fire*, but not glowing magical auras, as from swords). Radiances of normally permanent duration will return 2-5 turns after this function is exercised.

The bearer of a *staff of night* can also *create darkness* in a 10'-radius sphere centered on the midpoint of the staff. Such darkness is equal in effects to that created by the second-level wizard spell *darkness, 15' radius*, and it moves with the staff. This function costs one charge per use and can be ended by mental command of the bearer; it can also be continued indefinitely, even if the staff is no longer in contact with a living being.

Once every seven days, the greatest power of a *staff of night* may be used. The bearer of the staff will feel (by a faint, continuous tingling) that this power is readied. A command word must be spoken to activate this power, and doing so drains six charges from the staff each time. Within one round, an umber hulk will appear. It will fight or otherwise perform at the staff bearer's bidding for three rounds, then vanish again. The umber hulk will always have 60+ hp and obey diligently and loyally in undertaking even obviously dangerous tasks (if directly asked to harm itself, it will do nothing). The bearer of the staff is rendered immune to the *confusion* power of the gaze of all umber hulks while the staff is grasped, at all times. If the umber hulk summoned by the staff is slain while in service to the staff bearer, the staff will instantly crumble to dust, its power gone forever.

Lord Aumry of Shadowdale (husband of the "witch" Sylune) once bore such a staff. It was stolen from his tomb by Lashan of Scardale, who is thought to still be alive and in hiding, and he may well still possess it (see "Lashan's Fall," in the *DM's Source-*

book of the Realms, from the FORGOTTEN REALMS® boxed set).

XP Value 3,000

Staff of scrivening

One end of a *staff of scrivening* will transfer a written spell of any level and type, even a spell forever denied to the staff-bearer for reasons of class, from its original text to another surface, such as a blank page of the staff bearer's spell book. The original text must be touched.

This function is by touch, drains two charges, and takes four rounds. In the first round, the original text must be touched; in the second, the staff must be moved to the surface to be written upon; in the third and fourth, the staff must be continuously touched to the surface to be written upon. One charge per round is drained, and if the process is interrupted, the charges used thus far are lost, and the attempt to write the spell fails. Writing requires no special spell inks or movements of the staff, nor even adequate light. The end product is always an exact duplicate of the original, including any faults. A spell concealed by a *secret page* spell cannot be written by use of this sort of staff, but the staff can be employed to copy a *secret page* spell itself.

At a cost of one charge per round, the bearer of a *staff of scrivening* can *read magic* (as the first-level wizard spell). Note that this power does not reveal the auras of magical dweomers, nor does it identify, activate, or reveal *glyphs* or *symbols*.

Anyone touching a *staff of scrivening* when a *glyph* or *symbol* is discharged is automatically protected against all effects of that *glyph* or *symbol*. This protection drains six charges per spell effect being defended against.

All staff functions are activated by silent force of will and require physical contact with the staff and concentration that must precede spell-casting.

XP Value 3,000

Staff of silence

A *staff of silence* drains one charge per round when activated. It can be used continuously, as long as the activator retains hold of the staff. Activation and deactivation are by silent act of will and take only an instant.

This type of staff conceals all noises created by the bearer from all other beings, including footfalls, spell incantations, the sounds made by things the bearer breaks by direct contact, and so on, within a 12' radius.

The bearer may also invoke a special sort of deafness upon himself to provide total protection against all spell, magical-item, or monster attacks that rely on sound (e.g., the roar of an androsphinx or the singing of harpies or bards). This deafness prevents real deafness from being inflicted upon the staff bearer (except by physical damage of his auditory organs), but does not prevent *truename*-

based magic (as per *Unearthed Arcana*, page 63) from affecting the staff bearer, or similar magic from taking normal effect. Other creatures, even if they touch the staff, are not protected by the staff in any way.

Once per day (144 turns), the bearer of a *staff of silence* can release the sounds it has "swallowed" and stored in a *sonic blast* attack. This attack has a cone-shaped area of effect, extending from one end of the staff up to 60' distant, widening from 1' in width at the tip of the staff to a 30'-diameter circle at the farthest extent of the cone. It is activated by will and occurs instantly, its effects ceasing at the end of the round of activation.

The *sonic blast* sounds like a high-pitched shriek. It can *cause deafness* (lasting 2-5 turns) and *stun* (lasting 1-6 rounds) all creatures in the area of effect who are able to hear and who fail saving throws vs. poison against each effect. The *sonic blast* also deals physical damage to living and nonliving objects, equal to one structural point or 2d12 damage (a successful save vs. spells equals half damage). Any tiny object may, at the DM's option, be flung 2d10 feet away from the staff by the blast. Any creature who fails a dexterity check on 1d20 may be hurled off its feet and thrown 1'-10' farther away from the staff.

There is no known "overload point" for such staves. A *staff of silence* has never

exploded or ceased to function because its stored sounds were not discharged. Activation of a *sonic blast* drains only one charge; the blast itself is powered by the sound energy stored by the staff.

XP Value 1,500

Staff of spheres

This rare and strange sort of staff was devised by Elminster himself long ago, when he was in Myth Drannor at the height of its greatness. All the staff does is create spheres—giant, transparent, floating bubbles that glow with a faint silver-blue radiance. These bubbles are 6' in diameter and, upon their creation, can be commanded to remain floating and motionless, to follow or precede the staff at a certain distance, height, and orientation, or to follow a straight-line journey away from the staff wielder, in any direction.

A bubble can carry any collection of things of up to 140 lbs. total weight, including living manner (if this limit is exceeded, the bubble will instantly burst). Any pointed or sharp objects allowed to contact the surface of such a bubble will also destroy it. A bubble gives off enough light to read by, but not enough to blind any creature or affect undead.

If cast around beings, a sphere allows the enclosed creatures clear vision and breathing, and it protects them with a *feather fall* spell if its movement is di-

rected downward or it bursts in a location that spills its occupants out for a fall (if the bubble fails due to weight overload, this protection does not apply). A spell, magical item, or artifact power of any sort cast into or out of a sphere will be negated, but it will destroy the sphere. If a sphere fails due to such contact, it negates any magic (including spell-like creature powers) entering or leaving its area in that round, not just one spell or effect.

Spheres are not prisons; any conscious, mobile being can easily break a sphere to escape (securely bound creatures cannot, nor can caged creatures, if the sphere is formed around their smooth-edged cage). Mages typically use such spheres as traveling storage for coins, food, weapons, or even open spell books, for which the sphere provides handy reading light. Spheres can also be used to convey food, treasure, or other items to creatures one does not wish to approach too closely.

A sphere has a movement rate of 16 when traveling "free" (that is, not linked to the location of the staff that formed it), but it can never develop sufficient velocity to break or move objects in its path, nor to deliver a weapon in an attack. Spheres can serve to deliver lit oil pots or torches to intended destinations, as nonmagical flame does not affect a sphere.

Such a staff can create a maximum of one sphere a round. Each sphere drains

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one charge during its creation, which requires an entire round to complete.

XP Value 4,000

Staff of surprises

This type of staff is usable by all intelligent creatures who know the command words of the particular specimen they are holding. Each staff function can be used in combination with all other staff functions, but only one function can be activated or deactivated per round. Each function drains one charge whenever activated, but "programming" item functions requires only the necessary spell-casting, speech, and concentration; no charges are drained. Activation requires a command word; deactivation requires that the word be spoken backward.

A *staff of surprises* can, upon command, suddenly grow a blade from either end of itself, doing 1d8 hp damage (1d12 to creatures larger than man-size) when used as a weapon. The weight and balance of the staff do not change.

Such a staff can also suddenly extend in length up to 60', to serve as a pike, sliding pole, bridging or reaching aid, etc. It will remain utterly straight and rigid, and can withstand 16 hp damage or 777 lbs. weight before breaking.

A *staff of surprises* can emit a "preprogrammed" sound or speech, of up to seven seconds' duration or 15 spoken words. This utterance can be a message, warning, incantation, threat, or an intent to deceive others into thinking a particular being or monster is near. If the sound is a spell incantation, no spell can be cast or "set off," but the sound can be an activation word for a magical item if touch or will-power is not also required. The staff's user determines what sounds will be "programmed."

A *staff of surprises* can also emit a visual *illusion* of any man-sized creature or object. This image must be created by casting any *illusion*-producing spell upon the staff, which absorbs an *illusion* contacting it if the staff's command word is spoken at the time. The illusion will be as good as the cast original (i.e., ranging from vague and fuzzy to utterly lifelike) and can move, gesture, and act; range and area of effect are as per the original spell or power. The image cannot speak or be made to react to its surroundings in any way, but it lasts for up to seven rounds (less if the programmer desires or if the staff wielder ends it sooner). Touching the image will not dispel or disrupt it.

XP Value 4,000

Staff of the moonglow

Devised long ago in the early days of the northern city of Silverymoon, staves of this sort are most often found in the hands of Harpers and elves. They are activated and deactivated by silent act of will combined with physical contact, and can be used by all races and classes of intelligent beings.

At a cost of one charge per round of use, the wielder of a *staff of the moonglow* can *pass without trace* (as per the first-level priest spell), *find the path* (as per the sixth-level priest spell), or have *free action* (as per the fourth-level priest spell).

A *staff of the moonglow* can also (at a cost of one charge per round of use) be made to glow with a pearly, blue-white radiance. This light fills a sphere 30' in radius, centered on the midpoint of the staff. Besides providing illumination for reading and other sight-related tasks, this radiance allows a *ring of shooting stars* located within it to operate as if it were underground, reveals the auras of all magical dweomers within its area of effect as amber *faerie fire* glows, and causes all undead within it to attack at -3 to hit. All magical inscriptions and *wizard marks* located within the *moonglow* will shine forth clearly and distinctly, even if normally *invisible* or magically concealed.

Whenever a *staff of the moonglow* strikes an opponent, the bearer can elect (at a cost of two charges) to forego all physical attack damage in exchange for forcing the struck creature to "stay." This power allows no saving throw and operates as follows: All creatures able to shift *out of phase* (into the ethereal or else-

where), *blink*, or *teleport* (including related spells or creature powers, such as the *dimension door* ability of a boggle) are prevented from doing so for one round. In other words, for the round that follows the staff attack, they cannot escape by magical means and may be attacked normally by the staff wielder and his companions. Creatures not able to use such abilities or spells are merely *slowed* for the one round following the staff attack.

A *staff of the moonglow* operates as a +4 weapon when used under an open, moonlit sky. If used under a starlit sky or under a night sky in which the moon is concealed by weather, it functions only as a +1 weapon. Underground, it has no bonuses, except that in all locations and conditions, the strike of a *staff of the moonglow* does double damage to all undead; it also counts as "holy" silver, and magical for attack purposes, and it affects trolls and other creatures susceptible to fire damage as though the physical damage of its striking were caused by flame. These staff properties drain no charges.

XP Value 3,000

Staff of vision

This rare type of staff drains one charge per round when activated and held by a living creature. It is usable by all intelligent creatures and is controlled by force of will. A *staff of vision* may be activated and used within the same round. Shutting down any power of the staff requires only an instant, but switching from one power to another requires an entire round between the uses of the different powers.

Such a staff can empower any one creature touching the staff to *detect invisibility* (as per the second-level wizard spell, with an effective range of 90'), use *infravision* (as per the third-level wizard spell), or have *true seeing* (as per the sixth-level wizard spell, with no ointment necessary).

Such staves never allow *X-ray vision* and cannot be used continuously for very long, as their effects are mentally tiring. A *staff of vision* can be used by a being only for as many rounds at a time as the user has intelligence points. After using such a staff for six rounds or more, any user must refrain from using it again for at least four rounds, or wild hallucinations will result; these preclude proper use of the staff's powers and might guide the affected being into behavior dangerous to himself or his companions.

Each *staff of vision* has a secret command word. Anyone who utters the word while touching the staff to any being, including himself, may call forth the special power of this type of staff. At a cost of three charges, such a staff can *cure blindness*; unlike the third-level priest spell, the staff will repair or restore damaged eyes. Insufficient charges cause this special power to fail.

XP Value 5,000

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Magic Mangling Made Easy

Sorcerers getting you down?
Here's what you can do about them

by Gregory W. Detwiler

Magic and magic-users are the mainstay of many parties in AD&D® games to even the odds in battle. As wizards get to be high in level, this turns into an unfair advantage when the encounter is not properly handled. Actually, spell-casters of any class are quite vulnerable in battle, not merely in terms of taking damage but also in the chances of having their spell preparations disrupted. Even before the battle, or before the adventure for that matter, things can happen that could totally nullify the advantages of magic. This fact of life can, by itself, turn a victorious party into a doomed one. It certainly prevents game disruption due to overly powerful characters.

Interrupted spell-casting

Many DMs do not remember that a magic-using character needs complete concentration for casting a spell (this also applies to a psionic character going into a "combat trance"). Any interruption, even a mere shove, can spoil the dweomer (see the 1st Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 65, or the 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook*, page 85).

This has important implications, as it means that even a nondamaging attack can harm the party if it spoils a spell. Mages frequently fight from the middle of a ring of protective fighters engaged in melee. If one of those fighters is driven back and bumps the mage—no spell. If a hacked-off bit of armor or loose piece of equipment flies through the air and hits the wizard, even if it does no damage—no spell. If the noise of indoor combat makes a stone or bit of plaster fall from the ceiling and hit the mage—no spell. A bumpy ride on horseback or a wave splashing over a boat will disrupt a wizard's or priest's spell as effectively as a direct hit from a sword. Thus, foes can disrupt spell-casting by throwing almost anything at the caster: small sacks or pouches with flour in them, light (nondamaging) pebbles, even mud pies. The act of dodging a blow, which occurs if a spell-caster wants to apply his armor-class bonus from dexterity to prevent his being struck, negates his spell-casting. Think about it.

Aside from free movement, many spells require material components and the chanting of magic words. A *silence, 15' radius* spell can effectively "shut up" a magic-user, ruining his spell preparations. This clerical spell is only second level, enabling low-level characters and creatures to even the odds against high-level foes. It is recommended that DMs allow humanoid shamans to cast *silence, 15' radius* along with other second-level clerical spells, just as humanoid witch doctors are allowed (in the 1st Edition DMG, page 40) to cast *invisibility*, another odds-evener. Neither of these spells does damage in and of itself, but each can be an important addition to a battle. (Of course, it helps if the party does not have access to the spell vocalize, from the Complete *Wizard's Handbook*, page 99.)

Material components are used in a great many spells, but there are many flaws in having to use them. A long, drawn-out wilderness adventure, whether in an underground cavern complex or the great outdoors, means that the spell-casters will be cut off from their sources of man-made spell components, such as the miniature platinum sword needed for *Mordenkainen's sword*, or the glass, amber, or crystal rod used in the preparations for *lightning bolt*. Once used, they're gone—and so are the chances to recast those spells.

Also, never ignore the potential for theft or accidents causing the spell-caster to lose stored material components. Did water get

in your wizards pouch during the river crossing and dissolve the sugar in it? Forget about casting an *insect plague* spell. Did a grasshopper or caterpillar get into a backpack and devour the green plant matter there? Say goodbye to casting *hallucinatory terrain* in rocky highlands or desert. Ditto for *dig*, if that miniature metal shovel and bucket failed to save vs. electricity when that blue dragon breathed on your wizard (material components should have to make item saving throws along with all the rest of the gear). And how many spells are lost if your cleric's silver holy symbol is picked up by Nimblefinger Niles, or her holy water is drunk by a thirsty halfling porter?

Possibly the worst part of having to use spell components is the fact that it means your character has at least a partial dependency on others. From merchants to jewelers to skilled craftsmen, there is a host of people who can totally nullify your character's abilities if they bear him ill will. Unless he has the skill and knowledge to recognize different types of animal hairs and plant leaves, tell real gemstones from fake ones (this can be tricky if they're powdered), or determine if objects of gold, silver, or platinum have base metals worked in, a spell-caster will never be totally sure of his spell components. Impurities in lumps of sulphur, saltpeter, and other substances can be very difficult for even someone with alchemical knowledge to detect at a glance. A spell-caster had better be good to his component suppliers, or he may live (barely) long enough to regret it. A player whose spell-caster is an overbearing ass can be hit where it hurts!

Now for one of the most ignored subjects of all: rolling to determine if the characters have caught any diseases. Sickness is not a glamorous part of the game (unless it came from a mummy's touch or a hostile cleric's *cause disease* spell), but one form of illness is ideal in causing low-budget but major problems. I am speaking of allergies. Allergies can cause a great deal of trouble for any characters (imagine a cavalier who's allergic to horses) but are peculiarly suited to toning down spell-casters. Among other things, wizards are often less athletic and have less robust health than fighters, so they should catch diseases more often if any logic applies. Perhaps in a magical universe, allergies are a form of *curse* rather than something that can be wiped out by a simple cure *disease* spell. Finding a way to eliminate an allergy can be an adventure in itself.

Just think of all those awful things mages use as spell components. Allergic to bat guano or sulphur, are we? No *fireball* spell for *your* wizard. If he's allergic to fur, as many people are, he's allergic to one of the components for *lightning bolt* spells. If insect cocoons are anathema, *polymorph other* spells are effectively out of reach. And if, through a curse or some other fell effect, a druid becomes allergic to mistletoe—horrors! The single-item allergy

is also useful if a player's mage gets in the habit of using a single spell such as *fireball* all the time. He will be forced to diversify and show more imagination, at least until he is cured.

Even if a magic-using character is not allergic to his own components, allergies can still cause him lethal problems. Simple hay fever can make him nearly useless in an outdoor adventure. If mold or dampness has this effect on him, the same goes for dungeon and cavern adventures. If he's allergic to the party's pack animals, he'll stay as far away from them as he can. One problem: Mages usually stay to the rear with the animals in a fight, to be in a safe spell-casting position. If the mage hangs around up front with the fighters, there's a much greater chance that he'll be hit in combat, with all that implies. And if the group is cornered and everyone is crowded together (pack animals included), there'll be one mage who won't be using his magic to get the group out of its predicament.

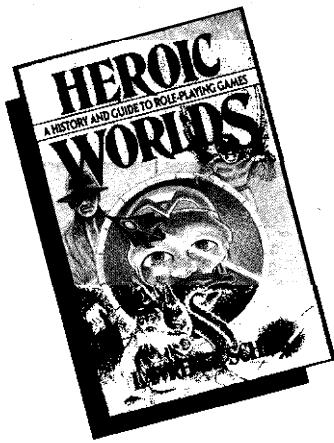
Finally, consider that the victim may be allergic to some magical items because of their components. This would be especially true with potions and scrolls, as potions and scroll ink are made of many weird things. A character could get sick upon drinking a certain potion, even vomiting and going into shock if the allergy is bad enough. And don't forget allergies to normal items. This might keep a fighter from drinking a potion of giant *strength*, or prevent him from wielding that fur-trimmed *mattock of the titans*. Healing could be difficult if *Keoghtom's ointment* makes one break out in a rash. Magically created items might have similar effects; the character could get sick eating magically purified food or food made by *create food and drink*. *Murlynd's spoon* and the *mantle of Celestian* could likewise produce literal poison to some hapless individual, and the chap allergic to potions of *water breathing* who finds himself on board a sinking ship is in a serious predicament indeed.

Magic-item nullification

Often, in "Monty Haul" games, it is the magic of collected items, rather than the "natural" magic of party spell-casters, which makes a group too strong. Fortunately, there are a number of solutions.

The easiest thing to do (after insuring that no one gets a powerful magical item in the first place) is to destroy the blasted things; magical items have to take their chances along with everything else. Among the magical items in the DMG is the *rod of cancellation*, which permanently ruins items' dweomers. They're not much good in a long-term campaign, however; magical items are so eagerly sought after by all that it is hardly credible that people would be so willing to ruin them or make many magical items that have this destructive effect. Use them once in a while, but don't depend too heavily on

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them. Ditto for trained or wild disenchancers. (Note, however, the effects of a *dispel magic* spell on a potion, and the temporary effects of that spell, *anti-magic shell*, and a *wand of negation* on other magical items.)

Actually, the perils of magical and monstrous combat are more than sufficient for ruining magic. Even in the old D&D® game, one solution had appeared: the rust monster. Think of all the magical items made of metal: almost all swords and other weapons (the heads of magical spears, polearms, and arrows will be metallic), many suits of armor, nearly all rings, and many miscellaneous knick-knacks such as *bracers of defense*, *horns of blasting*, and *Daern's instant fortress*. Can anything be more fun than decoying characters to the top of a *Daern's instant fortress* with an aerial attack on one side, while a rust monster sneaks in below from the other side to bring the thing down under their feet? Magical weapons and armor get a saving throw of only 10% per "plus." The +5 stuff in the *DMG* thus gets only a 50-50 chance of survival, while the two +6 swords in the AD&D 1st Edition *Unearthed Arcana* have a 40% chance each of being rusted per strike, more than enough for a determined DM intent upon game balance. You can assign any saving throw you like for "plusless" magical items; they're totally at your mercy. Given the fact that the rust monster has been involved in the D&D and AD&D games from almost the very beginning, all I can say about the "excess magic items" debate is: What in the world is all the fuss about?

For nonmetallic magical items, an attack against metal can still be useful. Many wands are tipped with metal (the *wand of earth and stone* from *Unearthed Arcana* is a notable exception); this is a safe and easy way to insure game balance. Any clasp holding a magical item to its owner's belt is likely to be metallic, including belt and backpack buckles.

It is, of course, possible to come up with monsters like the rust monster whose attacks destroy wood, cloth, ivory, or leather instead of metal. In fact, these already exist. Just check the *Monstrous Compendium* for the dietary preferences of the various "clean-up crew" monsters (see "Pudding, Deadly," and "Oozes/Slimes/Jellies"). A simple illusion spell could trick wise characters into attacking the wrong monster with the right weapons, and no one said a black pudding had to always be black (maybe one variety is white but otherwise acts like a black one). As with character saving throws, remember that a small chance of failing a saving throw is not the same thing as having no chance of failing a throw. If the character's deity feels the character is not paying attention to his alignment or is just too proud, let him have it!

I noted earlier that pushing, shoving, etc., can spoil conventional spell-casting; the same problem can apply to the use of magical items. A fighter who is forced

back may jostle a mage's arm, thereby causing the wand in the latter's hand to point at something or someone other than the intended target. Assume the party is trapped in a small room at the end of a long, straight corridor, and the mage is pointing a *wand of fireballs* down the corridor at an approaching monster. An inadvertent move by a fighter or a stray motion from a frightened pack mule, and the mage's wand arm is struck aside to point at a wall inside the room. The *fireball* will still go off and expand out into the corridor, of course, but only *after* it's crisped everyone in the room. It's not just a question of bumping the wizard, either. A vagrant breeze at the wrong moment can blow *dust of sneezing and choking* back at the party. Spell-casters in a well-run campaign should be *very* careful with their magic.

One thing I've always wondered about since first reading of D&D and AD&D game dragons is the neglect of one of the most striking aspects of dragon anatomy, as folklore has it: the poisonous and corrosive effect of dragon blood. Both European and Oriental legends are full of tales of the dangerous, unique, and useful qualities of the blood of these fanciful beasts, yet the D&D and AD&D games hardly mention this. It's not totally unknown in gaming (the DRAGONQUEST™ game, put out by late, lamented SPI, mentions it), but "our" games say nothing about it.

This is a serious omission. Given a beast whose blood has the combined effects of poison and acid (like the things in *Alien* and *Aliens*), the DM can insure that any melee combat with such a beast will be highly risky for both characters and their gear. Any weapon will have to save vs. acid each time it scores a successful hit on the beast (special purpose weapons such as *dragon slayer* swords should get a hefty bonus). In a battle, the monster's blood might well get splattered all about, ruining armor and other apparel, poisoning anyone with exposed flesh (such as wizards), and even ruining some of the treasure. Characters should do a bit of cleaning up after the fight in order to forage for treasure in relative safety. This adds substantially to the amount of time characters spend in the monster's lair, meaning more time available for other monsters to show up, and more time spent in exciting and resource-consuming combat. The less gear and magic the party has when it heads for home with the treasure, the more the players will be forced to use their wits instead of sheer brute force.

Following folklore examples can be quite useful in the game. A tradition-minded DM might not like using creatures such as a rust monster in an ancient or medieval campaign, thinking they are more silly than fantastic. But given dragons with corrosive blood, the peculiar talents of rust monsters and puddings are totally unnecessary; besides, dragon blood has corrosive effects on *all* materials, not just

metal. This can promote player caution. Fighters might be sure to wear metal gauntlets when handling weapons stained with dragon blood or some other fell substance.

As another folklore example, the original basilisk was a poisonous beast with a gaze like the catoblepas (originally an oxlike beast). If slain by a weapon, the basilisk's venom would magically go up the weapon's shaft and slay the victor holding it. If the victor was mounted, his steed would be slain as well. Forcing characters to wipe off all weapons after a battle might be irritating, but it's worth it when someone in a hurry does a bad job or forgets altogether.

Faking it

When you don't have magic, fake it. This applies equally well whether you've got a hero trying to bluff his way out of a fight, or you're a DM trying to think of new and unusual ways to drive the players crazy. For a sample of this sort of thing, consider the following variant on an old theme:

The lord mayor of a town in a forest has summoned the party on a matter of great importance. His son went into the woods on a lone hunting trip and has been gone for several days. Upon hearing the direction in which he went, the heroes recall from previous outings that a dryad lives in that neck of the woods. As the lord mayor's son is rather handsome, it seems probable that said dryad has *charmed* him into an extended date. Off the heroes go, looking forward to an undemanding rescue mission. They barge in on the dryad's grove, discover the couple together, and a spell-caster of your choice hits the lad with the old reliable *dispel magic* spell. And nothing happens. The young man still maintains that he loves the dryad and wants nothing more than to stay with her forever.

Obviously, the spell did not do what the caster intended. Why not? What fell magic is at work here? More *dispel magic* spells are cast, all seemingly ineffective. The numerical odds for several spells failing are ridiculous. So what happened? How could a dryad put that much force into her spells? Is she really a dryad? Perhaps she's really a fiend—and a high-level one at that—in disguise!

Actually, the explanation is quite simple. All dryads look like beautiful young women, and the lord mayor's son is a lonely, handsome young man (the only unattached girl in town could give a medusa lessons in horrid appearance), so the pair have naturally enjoyed each other's company and have fallen in love. Two people falling in love without benefit of spell or philtre may be hard for characters in a magic-ridden world to appreciate.

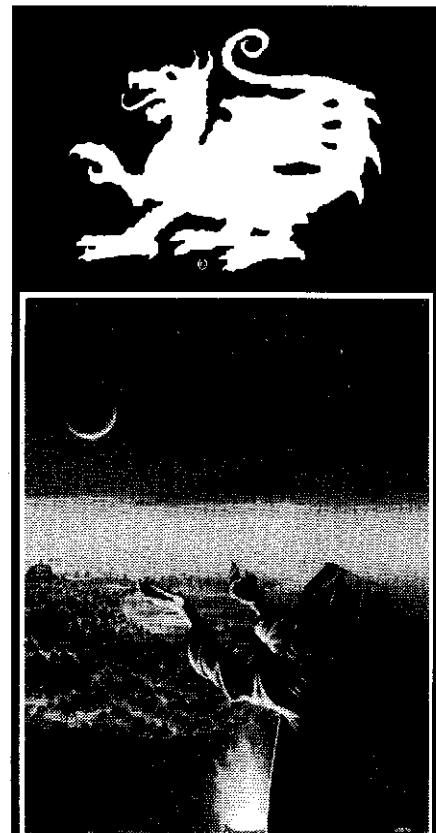
Aside from giving players an object lesson in how the little things in life can make a campaign interesting, this scenario is also good in its own right. Suppose the lord mayor wants his son to marry a regu-

lar human being. This would involve breaking up a truly happy couple. But if one or more heroes worships a love deity such as Aphrodite, complying with the lord mayor's demands might be out of the question. The cleric of such a deity might face a choice of losses: his spells (and divine backing in general), or his head. The possible ill effects of this incident range from unemployment with no references to a full-scale civil war. This problem must be delicately handled, and the DM should not stop play while the players write to "Dear Abby" for advice.

Another example of faking it consists of outright bluffing. If the characters have magical weapons that they are justifiably proud of, you can find a threat that might take those weapons away if they're not careful. If you want to save a cornered NPC for a future adventure, have him fiercely brandish a short staff and proclaim it to be a *rod of cancellation*. This is a good way to make magic-loving heroes back off. This works better if *Nystul's magic aura* is cast on the rod, in case the party uses *detect magic* in an attempt to call the NPC's bluff. The ideal place for this trick is in a dungeon complex that the party knows is inhabited by at least one monster that can be harmed only by enchanted weapons. If charging after that NPC means risking the loss of the group's only magical sword, the heroes will think twice before closing in for the kill. Think as well of the blackmail potential if the NPC manages to infiltrate the tower of a wizard character and suddenly appears, holding the rod over the wizard's *staff of the magi* and assuming a self-sacrificing pose. Of course, once the NPC gets away (at least for the moment), you should find some way of letting the heroes know how they were tricked. A long-lasting vendetta can make for a healthy campaign.

I hope this article has thoroughly demonstrated that magic is not the all-powerful force in the game that players hope it is or DMs fear it is. With careful study of all aspects of magic and a bit of advance preparation, the DM will find that it is relatively easy to counter the effects of too much magical power in the player characters' hands. This will remove what is perhaps the #1 source of game imbalance and force the players to use their wits instead of brute magical force. This, in turn, can only lead to an improved game and more fun for all concerned.

[More details on the acquisition of spell components may be found in "Living in a Material World," from DRAGON® issue #81 (reprinted in the Best of DRAGON Magazine Anthology, vol. 4, as "It's a Material World"). Spell-component sabotage is also mentioned in "Revenge of the Nobodies," in issue #112, and the use of alternate or defective spell components is described in "Variety, the Spice of Magic," in issue #147.]



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Eimir 5, AY 2000—Raman:

after the admiral's visit to Hule, it was decided to halt our voyage for a few days. Xerdon has been feeling weak recently. Haldemar and Talasar took him down to a small deserted island for some rest and recreation.

From my vantage point far above them, I could see the officers and several boltmen enjoying their time in an idyllic cove. Xerdon was resting under a silk tent, sipping through a straw one of Talasar's secret concoctions that he had carried with him from the ship. It must have been a new formula, for I don't recall any previous drink that required the presence of

a pineapple slice, nor tiny Ochalean umbrellas stuck into cherries. Talasar spent his time demonstrating roast pig recipes from his homeland to the crew. I couldn't see Haldemar anywhere, however. I had thought he was swimming, but it must have been someone else. I did spy a boltman courageously standing on a flat piece of wood, riding on top of a large wave. Or was that indeed the admiral? My eyesight is not what it once was.

I sighed and returned to my duties. I had been asked to gather information on Hule and get it ready before the crew's return from R&R. I suppose everyone is entitled to a vacation once in a while. Children . . .

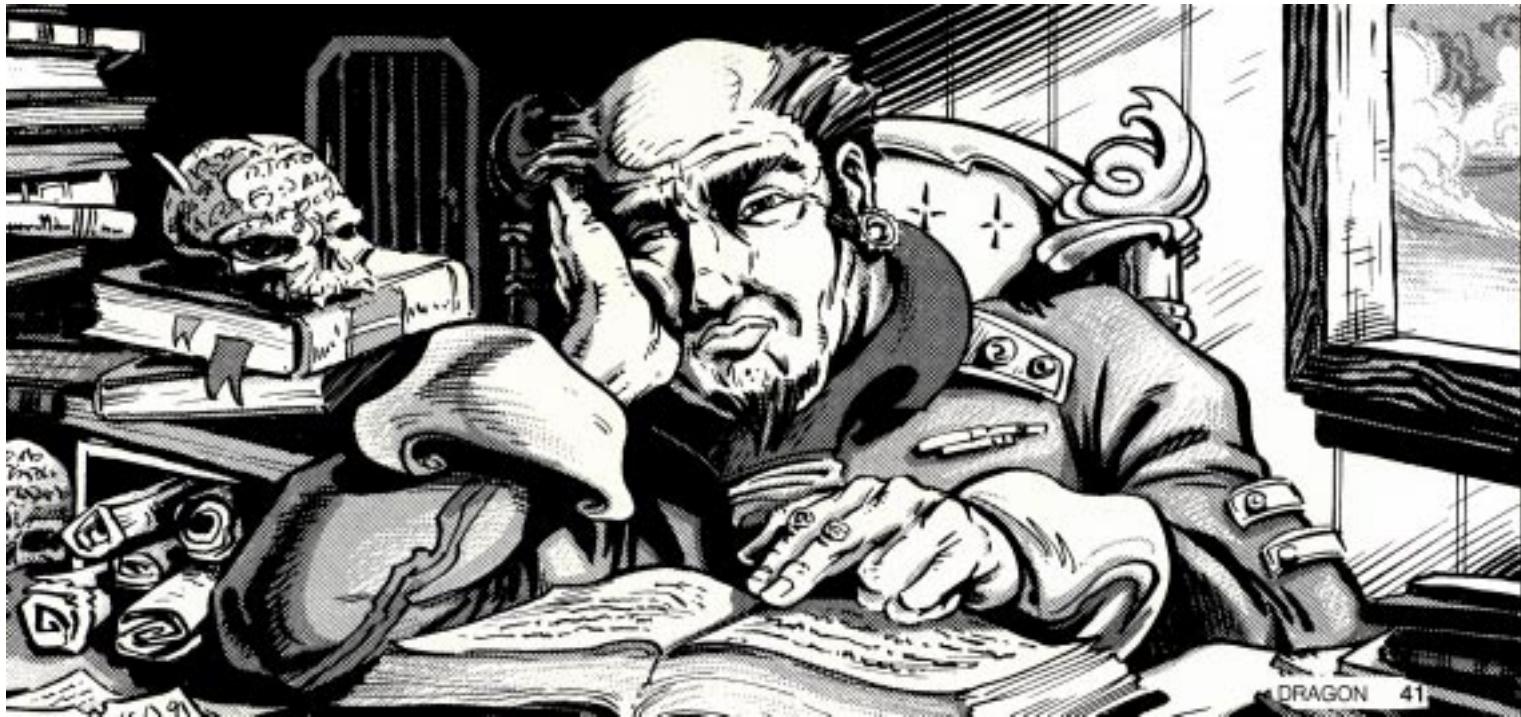
Hule

*A Report for the Admiral and Staff
by Raman Nabonidus, Chief Engineer
of the "Princess Ark"*

It wasn't difficult to find material about the Great Hule. Between what I could dig up in my own library, some help from Yarani, and an impromptu visit to a library in Yenigaz, my writing table quickly became very crowded with books, scrolls, parchments, wax tablets, printed silks, ivory engraved with minuscule runes, skullcap etchings, painted papyruses, sculpted marbles, and other literary bric-a-brac. Here is what I gathered from all this.

The Great Hule is a strange nation, ruled by people who call themselves Holy Men. However, most of their "holy" philosophy seems to be based on lies and trickery. Using the people's fervor for their Immortals, these Holy Men have placed themselves in a ruling position.

Several Immortals are honored in Hule. The greatest one is called Bozdogan. According to certain scriptures I acquired from an Ochalean dealing in obscure





antiques and lost tomes, the true goal of the Holy Men is to acquire for Bozdogan (or his Immortal companions) the greatest number of followers. That is done through skillful deceit, which is a holy act in itself.

Also according to the same sources, Bozdogan, also known as the Prince of Deceit (Sphere of Thought), found a way to nourish himself from his followers' trickery. Every time someone deludes someone else, Bozdogan gains some sort of arcane power. The greater the number of people involved and the subtler the duplicity, the more "food" for Bozdogan. Petty lies or blatant frauds are worthless in this respect and could cause unrest among the people; such are frowned upon by the Holy Men.

I found rudiments of Hulean philosophy written on a goblin's skullcap dating back to BC 1,500. Hule has occasionally shrunk as a result of invasions or wars, but its slow expansion has mostly remained unchecked. Hule is a mosaic of various microcultures that have fallen, one after the other, to the Hulean deceit-machine.

The Holy Men do not necessarily belong to the clergy, although many do. There are an inordinate number of thieves among the Holy Men, too. Holy Men are especially favored of Bozdogan, and they occupy official positions in Hule's ruling class. Unmistakable signs help determine who is favored, such as being incapable of ever uttering the words "yes" and "no," "black" and "white" or "is" and "have," or the inability to use the letter "e" or numbers of any kind, etc.

These Holy Men maintain civil order and the "orthodoxy of thoughts," providing enlightened rulership of the land through deceit. In Hule, lies are a holy thing, and certain types of untruths constitute ritual acts in the Bozdogan philosophy. To qualify for holiness, lies must ultimately perform at least one of the following functions:

- Bring new followers to adopt the ways of Bozdogan;
- Uphold and further the expansion of the Great Hule;
- Uphold and further the goals of the Holy Men;
- Bring the downfall of foreigners, infidels, or "wrong thinkers"; or,
- Acquire wealth in the name of the Temple of Hule, usually by trickery, theft, extortion, and so forth.

According to a Hulean lawyers' manual, if someone can prove that certain lies were perpetrated for one of the reasons given above, any kind of misrepresentation, libel, or deceit becomes perfectly legal and even praised. Those who think differently are "wrong thinkers" and are sent to the temple to learn the error of their ways.

Of course, it is wise not to lie inconsiderately; a lie is a double-edge weapon. It is ill advised to lie to Holy Men, and among Holy Men it is heretical to lie to a superior—which explains why the Hulean ruling class is so rigidly classified in a

complex, extremely detailed hierarchy.

Grand deceit of the more subtle and daring kind, especially involving a great number of unsuspecting people, is what truly makes the stuff of the legendary Hulean heroes, such as Hosadus, mentioned hereafter. The best deception remains the one where the victim is ultimately content and largely oblivious.

Inside a set of translucent marbles borrowed from the library at Yenigaz, in which magical letters appeared when held up to the eye, I researched details on the history of Hule. There, among the colored swirls, I discovered the mention of Hosadus. A great goblin horde, the Wolf-Riders lead by the bloody Wogar, ravaged the lands of Central Hule, circa BC 1271. Wogar's horde captured Hosadus and others as slaves after slaughtering a great many people. Late one evening, Hosadus accidentally overheard an old goblin shaman mention the Blue Knife, an ancient relic the goblins had been after for centuries. The quest for this object had brought them to Hule.

Hosadus walked up to Wogar himself and declared the Immortals had sent them to him, for he, he said, knew of the Blue Knife's location. He *animated* a simple sword enchanted with *continual light*, then had it hover in the dark over his own hand as a "omen" of the Immortals. That feat impressed the goblins beyond all hope of their realizing his trickery.

Hosadus said the Blue Knife lay beyond the Black Mountains to the east, then beyond the Great Waste. There, they should seek the holy relic. Two thirds of the horde moved on, spurred by the unexpected revelation, while the remainder stayed in Hule as followers of Hosadus. Since then, descendants of Wogar became the mainstay of Hosadus' Honor Guard. Their symbol is a blue dagger pointing down over a sable background.

Legends say that Hosadus died, but Bozdogan returned him to the living a few centuries ago, when Hule threatened to crumble before the aggression of northern barbarians. Newly reincarnated, he perpetrated many other hoaxes that saved the hagiarchy and caused dissent and chaos among the barbarians.

There are clues in the tomes and scrolls I studied that corroborate the legend of Hosadus's return among the mortals. What is certain is that fervor for Bozdogan increased drastically during that period. Hosadus, or perhaps someone claiming to be him, became the architect of the greatest expansion in Hulean history. He founded his holy capital at the heart of a huge forest called Darkwood. This fortified city-temple was far away from urban centers. It seems The Master now rules the vast Hule from there.

Other scriptures I gathered from Yavdlom scribes tell of a favor granted by Bozdogan. The Immortal gave Hosadus a magical avatar as a substitute for his old and failing body. Perhaps the true body

still lies somewhere today. The scribe who wrote this tale conjectured Bozdogan's wish was to give his trusted disciple more time in a quest to attain true Immortality at his side.

Nowhere in the ship's archives could I find mention of the avatar's death or Hosadus's success. It is hard to decide whether Hosadus is The Master. I could find nothing that says he couldn't be, but most of our references are many years old.

The Master is currently very much in control of Hule. Much of his armies rely on humanoid tribes, particularly goblins, though a vast corps of dervishes defend the many city-temples. Among these dervishes are a number of elite troops armed with red steel scimitars, which are lighter and more resilient than common steel weapons. These dervishes have regularly repulsed barbarian incursions from the north, thanks mostly to their red steel equipment. [See the notes on red steel in this column in DRAGON® issues #171 and #172.]

The people of Hule view the brutal and bloodthirsty northern hordes as a great peril and have justifiably feared them throughout their history. Hulean literature depicts barbarians as faithless, ignorant brutes incapable of understanding and adopting the subtle ways of Hule. It would be safe to presume these barbarians nourish a particular hatred for the bizarre practice of Holy Deceit that clashes with their simple, straightforward customs. For them, Hulean-bashing is a both a useful and praised activity.

Given certain footnotes in a Zvornikian Gazetteer, I conjecture that Hulean red ore is mined and processed in Darkwood, but this is a minor source of red steel compared to that available in Slagovich. Hule recently spent huge sums of money to buy Slagovich's stockpiles. Many other states compete for that precious metal, especially these nations on the opposite side of the Bay of Hule. There are rumors of other mines existing on the Savage Coast, southwest of Hule, but if these mines exist their owners have hidden them very well. In a merchant diary dated AC 987, I also found mention of a Minrothad ship that bought red steel, then sailed back toward the East.

This concludes my study of the Great Hule. For me to unveil more on this vast nation and its dealings with neighboring states, it would be useful to visit the Savage Coast and gather as much literature as possible. This would reveal more about what other people think of Hule as well. I would finally suggest visiting another library during our next voyage.

To be continued . . .

Letters

The article "Up, Away, and Beyond" in issue #160 dealt with the basic principles of space flight in the D&D game, but did not give any details of speeds attainable. The nautical ship speeds given in the Expert Set seem far too slow for space travel. The "Voyage" series implied that

flight is much faster above the skyshield. If so, how much faster? Does speed increase beyond the moon's orbit and outside the solar system, allowing for interplanetary or interstellar space travel in a reasonable time scale? Do other means of travel (teleport or gate for example) have to be used?

I think you are trying to peg a number where one is not needed. The explanation about speed in space given by Haldemar is conveniently vague for a reason. Exactly what speed a ship may reach may not be relevant in the game since what really matters is when you get there—and that is the domain of playability, within the boundaries of a role-playing game and the schemes of your DM.

Yes, speed in space varies with the proximity of celestial bodies that exert gravity. The farther away such bodies are, the faster the speed of a ship. Speed would continue to increase past the moon and the Known Worlds planetary system. There is no actual limit to speed or acceleration (call that "warp speed," if you like). If your DM wants your raft from outer space to go faster than light, fine; the consequences are your DM's problem.

As far as combat goes, if a ship gets in your way, you will most definitely slow down (call that "impulse speed," if you want). This should give at least some chance for interception and space combat. In this case, simply use the speeds given in the Expert Set. It should not matter whether the speeds of fighting ships are actual speeds, since the relation between the respective speeds still remains proportional.

Remember that the D&D game is not a science-fiction game, nor does it rely on true science.

The ads for the new D&D game (the 1991 black-box version) have gotten our gaming group a bit concerned. Will the old D&D rules go out of production, and if so, when? None of us are thrilled at the idea of buying a whole new series of boxes. Here in the U.K., things can get expensive.

On the subject of cash flow, we found DRAGON Magazine to be a good bargain for game ideas. Unfortunately, most of it deals with the AD&D® game, and converting the material to the D&D game sometimes gets difficult. Will you print an article on converting AD&D game information to D&D rules?

The new D&D game does not affect the rules. These are the same rules that you have grown accustomed to. The new game offers radically different components, however, which should appeal more to true novices. Although in your case the game is not absolutely necessary, you may want to acquire a copy so you could use it to bring new gamers in to your group.

The old boxed sets will eventually disappear from the market. They will be replaced with the D&D game Cyclopedia. This 304-page hardback book offers all of the material contained in these sets, reor-

ganized to be more easily used. Here again, very few changes will be implemented to ensure all of your older accessories do not become obsolete. The Cyclopedia will also include the skills presented in the Gazetteers, an atlas of the Known World and the Hollow World, and a complete guide to convert AD&D rules to D&D rules (and vice-versa).

The bottom line is that you just need to purchase that one book. It should hit the shelves in the U.S. in November.

What's the name of the Known Worlds planet? Or is that the name of the world itself?

Mystara. The Known World is the geographical area located at the southeastern corner of the continent of Brun. Mystara contains both the Known World and the Hollow World. Mystara also has two moons: Matera (which is similar to our Earth's moon) and Patera (also known as Myoshima, the invisible moon described in the "Princess Ark" series).

Does the D&D *Cyclopedia* cover the entire range of D&D rules, or is it a follow-up to the new D&D game set?

The Cyclopedia covers all the rules needed for characters of levels 1 to 36.

Why won't the Immortals Set rules be included in the D&D game *Cyclopedia*? Are there plans for a new DM's screen? Why aren't there any novels that feature the people and the places of the D&D world? Surely with all the material that has been published for the Known World and the Hollow World, the writers who brought us the DRAGONLANCE®, GREYHAWK®, and FORGOTTEN REALMS® novels have plenty of background material.

The Immortals rules will be handled separately in 1992 in Wrath of the Immortals. The topic deserves more than a simple chapter in the D&D Cyclopedia. The Cyclopedia is already quite full with the first four sets. And yes, we have plans for an updated DM's screen, but it will be a while before it sees print.

Unfortunately, we live in a world suffering from AD&D game myopia. A lot that goes on in fantasy gaming seems to revolve around that commercial behemoth. This is why most of our novels are written for AD&D game worlds. However, with the new D&D game, things are now changing for the better. Our chances for having D&D novels are improving. Some of us have been pushing hard for those novels, but don't expect anything in the immediate future. In the meantime, feel free to send your comments on the subject to our marketing folks, here at TSR, Inc. (P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A)

I play with the AD&D 2nd Edition rules, using the Known World as a main setting, and really enjoy it. My players already know everything about dark elves, Tiamat,

and other AD&D game stuff, but in this setting, everything suddenly looks different. It works great.

You bet it does.

I looked at the largest map in the *Dawn of the Emperors* boxed set and could not locate Wendar or Denagoth. Was there an error in the design of that map? Will there be any corrections in a future article?

Well, yes to the first question. That portion of the map is not totally correct. Mea culpa; that one slipped by despite our frantic efforts to cover both the empires of Alphatia and Thyatis before deadline. For those unfamiliar with that region, Wendar and Denagoth are both located north of Glantri. They were presented in D&D module X11 Saga of the Shadowlord. Eventually, Wendar will be the subject of a Gazetteer-type accessory. Of course, Haldemar might just find a reason to fly there first.

What are the next Known World Gazetteers that you plan to release?

Tentatively, we should have Gazetteer-type accessories covering the following areas in this order: the Heldann Freeholds; Sind; and Wendar. These were the ones on which I received the most positive responses in the mail.

I am very pleased with the HOLLOW WORLD™ boxed set, though I do feel that magic-users have been severely limited in that setting. How about an article with new spells or powers only achievable by HOLLOW WORLD spell-casters?

The Spell of Preservation that shields the Hollow World has its merits, but I can understand your feelings. You can simply ignore the whole thing, but you would miss some of the Hollow World's particular flavor. Making new spells is also a viable way of dealing with the limitation.

In the meantime, you can buy off some of your players by allowing their Known World cleric or wizard characters to cast extra spells in addition to those they can normally cast. An extra 1st-level spell for spell-casters of levels 1-5, a extra 2nd-level spell for those of levels 6-10, etc. (up to an extra 7th-level spell for levels 31+), would be a reasonable way of balancing out Known World and native Hollow World spellcasters; they aren't as good, but they now have more spells to play with.

Will there be any Gazetteer-like products for the HOLLOW WORLD setting?

By the time this article reaches print, the first HOLLOW WORLD guide book should be out on the shelves. Look for HWr1 Sons of Azca (it has something to do with GAZ14 Atruaghin Clans). The next one, HWr2 The Kingdom of Nithia, is due out this fall, followed next year by HWr3 The Milenian Empire and its sister module, HWr4 The Milenian Scepter. Happy? Ω

**IT IS SAID THAT MAN IS MADE IN THE IMAGE OF god
and this god made the universe. Humanity feels confident
that it has a right to the title deeds. But there are other gods,
dark gods, gods in whose terrible image other creatures are
made - and these too might believe that**

THEY ARE DESTINED TO RULE....

K R Y O M E K

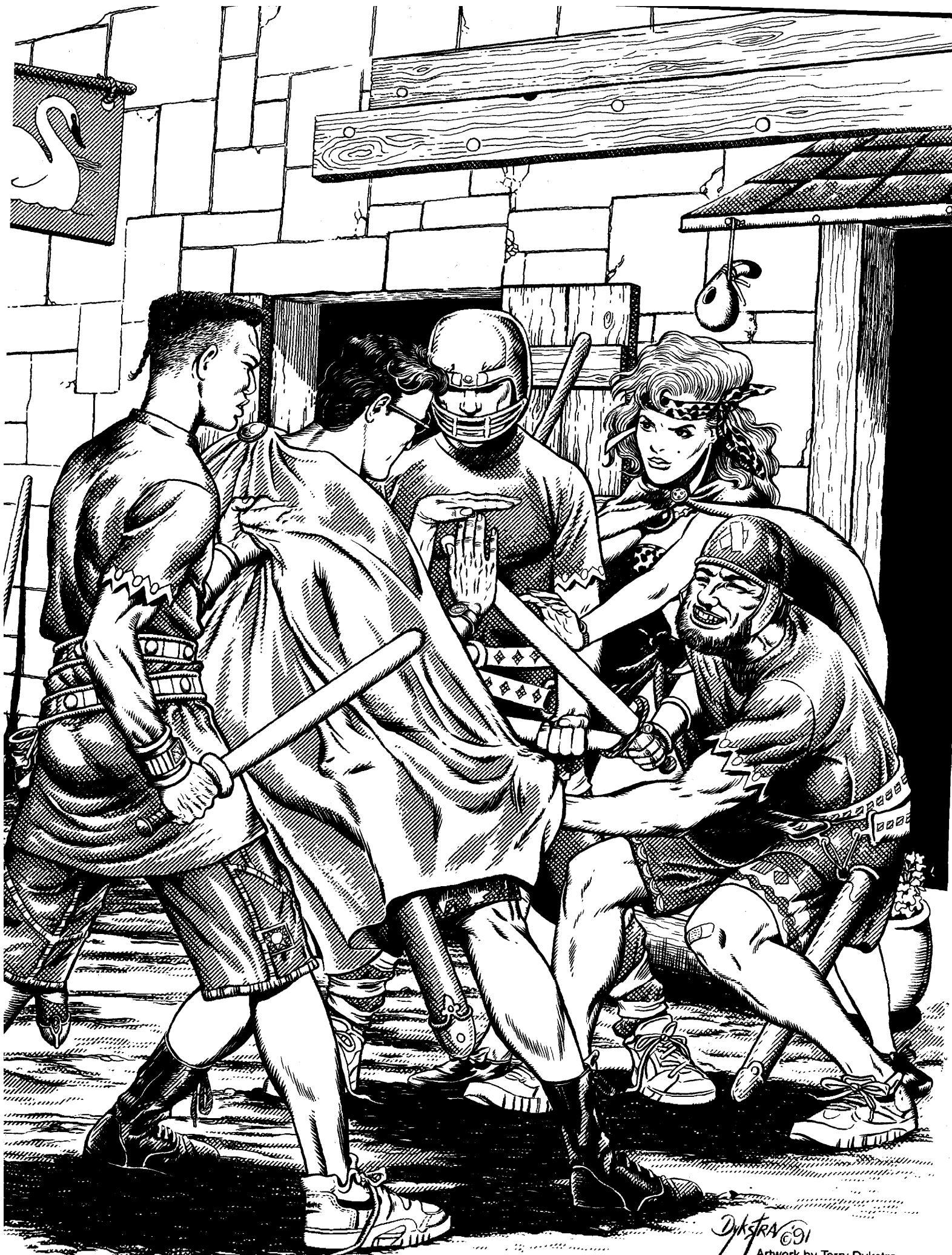
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Out of Your Chair, Into the Action!

Live role-playing: the next big wave in gaming

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"Stop, thief!"

The fog rolling in from Lake Ardynn made the dirty, uneven cobblestones of Ravenholt slippery and treacherous that evening as I dashed past Madam Zara's. All my years of training with the Thieves' Guild were being tested at this point. As I slipped from shadow to shadow, my feet made little sound.

I darted past the Mages' Guild and tried to ignore the mysterious scents calling me in. I noticed the sage next door, peering from her window, so I flashed my cloak her way, covering my face in the process.

Behind me came the sounds of pursuit as the duke's guards gathered in force. It seemed that a crowd of the local townsfolk, eager for excitement and the possibility of a reward, had also joined in the chase—much to the annoyance of the captain of the guard.

"He went that way!"

"What happened?"

"He's stolen the Dagger of Morgana!"

"It was one of the druids!"

So far, all was going to plan. The druids would be implicated, and we of the Ravenholt Thieves' Guild would finally have the Dagger of Morgana—a magical item rivaled in power only by the Amulet of Xylar. I was to meet the Fox behind the toymaker's shop, where he would take the druid's cloak from me and provide me with a new disguise and an alibi.

Behind me, I could hear the assembled mob becoming unruly, arguing with the guards about which path I had chosen for my escape. I recognized the voices of many of my fellow guild members causing a majority of the distractions. All was going to plan. This was going to be easy!

"Ah, here he is now!"

A trio of nasty-looking men with drawn long swords surrounded me as I skidded to a halt. Before I could react, I heard a spell being cast and felt the impact as my arms and legs refused to move. A Web spell!

The blue tabards of my captors told me that they were knights of the barony of Capulus. Were they going to arrest me?

Their smiles held no clue.

Countess Montesque raised an eyebrow slyly as she advanced. I knew I had no chance to escape. I felt someone dig through my cloak and pull out the dagger, "Here it is, my liege!"

I knew that voice. It was the Fox, that double-crosser!

"Thank you," the Countess said to me as she took the weapon. "Now let's see if it works."

I fell over in pain as I felt the dagger enter my side. My life was being sucked out of me, and there was no escape.

U n l e s s

"Hold!" I yelled. "I need a rules marshal!"

My captors blinked and looked around. Sometimes it takes a second or two to reorient yourself after being your character for so long. "I know where Bob is," said Dame Hart—or, rather, Michelle. She ran off as we smiled and waited.

Bob eventually came over to me. He's one of the marshals who can make decisions on game rules and resolve disputes. There are enough marshals around that it never takes long to find one.

"Bob," I whispered, "Does the dagger actually drain my life if I have a Mage Armor spell on myself?"

Bob smiled. "No, but you certainly can pretend it does"

I turned back to my captors. "Okay," I said, "I'm ready now." As the marshal gave the "play on" sign I fell to the ground, pretending to be drained.

Live games with NERO

For our live-action games, the three-year-old New England Roleplaying Organization (NERO) provides a campsite that is made to look like a medieval town. NERO also provides a book of rules and spells, but other than that, it basically leaves us players alone. No one told us to steal the Dagger of Morgana, nor did anyone follow us around with clipboards and dice. We decided to do this on our own. As long as we follow the rules, we have free will.

The idea behind live role-playing games is not new; many science-fiction, fantasy,

and gaming conventions have been doing them for years. In England, it's a fairly big business; in America, groups such as the International Fantasy Gaming Society (IFGS) provide a creative outlet for players tired of merely imagining a fantasy world in their heads. However, all of these games are limited in one way: They all have complex rules that require that a marshal or "Dungeon Master" to be present with each group.

The IFGS, for example, will take a small group of player adventurers and give it a quest. Along the way, the group will meet nonplayer characters (NPCs), fight monsters, and do all of the other things that gamers have their characters do in regular role-playing games. A game may last hours or even go overnight in rare instances. At all times, the marshal is watching, taking notes and answering questions. NERO has these sorts of adventures, too (we call them "modules"), but that is only a small part of what the game is all about.

In the NERO world, everyone is a player. For an entire weekend, over 300 players fill the town with barons, knights, squires, wizards, thieves, healers, gypsies, merchants, and beggars—each with his own personal goals, quests, and desires. Each of the five barons of the duchy of Ravenholt hires spies and makes plans; court intrigue runs rampant, and many of the adventurers in town find good employment there. Sometimes the tavern wenches are actually assassins, and woe to he who finds the Necromancers' Guild!

There are no alignments in the game, but evil, when discovered, is punished. Necromancy and theft are against the law, of course.

Because of this, the "plot" of a NERO game happens without much prodding from the NERO Executive Committee, which runs the events. The Plot Committee may drop certain items and rumors along the way, but how the game ends up is anyone's guess. There are enough safeguards in the game to discourage cheating and guessing.

Getting started

Let's suppose you were to join NERO. Here's how it would look to you:

First of all, you would create your character. You can be one of four classes: fighter, scholar, templar, or rogue. The scholars and templars are magic-users; within each spell-casting class, you can specialize in studying mage spells or healer spells.

As you play, you earn experience points (usually awarded by marshals) that you can then use to buy skills for your character. Skill prices vary, based on what class your character has; for example, it is fairly inexpensive for a mage to buy a Read Magic skill, but quite expensive for a fighter to do so.

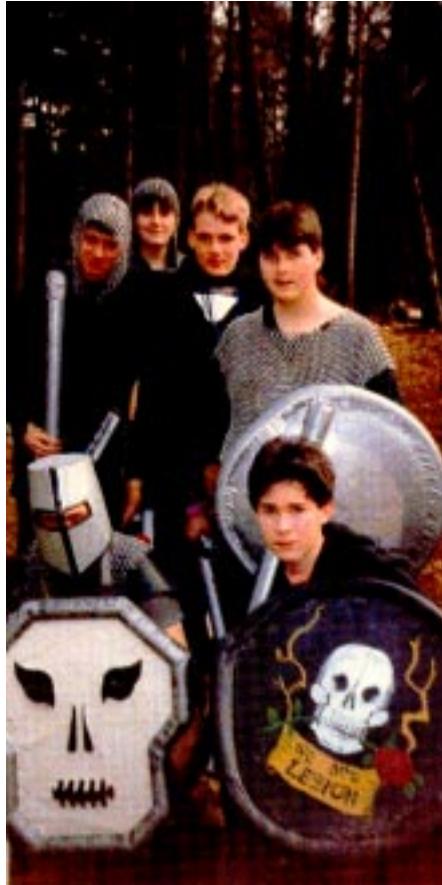
Because of this system of skill buying, no two characters in NERO games are alike. Just because you know someone's class and level doesn't tell you automatically what powers he has. A fifth-level fighter could have put most of his experience points into learning a few magic spells instead of working on a weapon proficiency. Some of the skills you can buy include spells (mage, healer, or spellsinger), armor repair, weapons proficiencies, crafts, picking locks, first aid, and spell research.

Now that you have a character, you check in for a NERO game weekend. You are given a small amount of starting money and a series of cards on a key ring that tell which skills you presently know. (When you buy new skills with your experience points, you get new cards.) This system allows other characters and the marshals to double check in case you claim to have a skill you don't have. You will also be given a badge to wear, on which you can keep track of your character's statistics.

One thing you might notice is that everyone in the NERO game wears a costume. It is required! It is amazing how good some of the costumes are, and you may feel a bit underdressed if the only clothing you have is a shabby tabard. The type of clothes you wear also helps with your armor rating. If all you have on is a costume, you get two points of armor. The more armor you wear (and the better it is made), the more points of protection you get. We're talking real armor here. Wearing a cloth shirt designed to look like chain mail will not get you the points you would get for wearing real chain mail.

Your armor points are displayed for all to see on the badge you wear. A dot represents each point you have. After a battle, you must remove dots based on how many points of damage you took. That way, if you see someone walking toward you dressed in plate mail but he has only one dot on his card, you should play it as if his plate mail has been ruined in battle.

On the back of the card are your "body points" our game's equivalent of hit points, which are based on your level and class. This information is put on the cards back because such information would not be available to anyone just walking by.



Getting into fights...

The weekend game begins. You go to the inn and request a room. Cap, a crusty old sailor, runs his inn like a tight ship and demands money up front. You have only a silver and two coppers, and he demands a silver. You'd better earn some money by tomorrow, or you'll be sleeping outdoors where the goblins are sure to get you!

It's Friday night and the town is buzzing. Guilds are meeting, adventuring groups are planning strategy, the elves are performing some ceremony, and the tavern is packed. Since you keep playing a character until he permanently dies or you decide to retire him, many people are getting reacquainted since the last weekend.

You walk over to the tavern but only get a few steps before something jumps out at you. It's a goblin! You can tell by his ugly green face and the orange mohawk.

Goblins and other monsters are some of the NPCs in NERO. People who want to play NPCs get free admission, but they must do what the NERO Monster Marshal tells them. The masks or makeup can be uncomfortable, but not having to worry about your character dying is a relief.

Weapons in NERO games are soft "boffer" weapons, basically PVC piping covered with foam rubber, with very soft ends. No one in a NERO game has ever been seriously injured using these things. A game of football is more dangerous than a NERO game fight. Players in NERO games either make their own weapons or

buy them from the town weaponsmith (for game and real money). The NERO Players' Handbook has detailed descriptions on how to make your own weapon.

The goblin advances and swings his sword. You pull out your trusty dagger. A dagger does only one point of damage, while a long sword (which the goblin has) does two. The goblin knows this and smiles, or at least you think he does behind his mask. What the goblin doesn't know is that one of the skills you bought is a weapon proficiency that allows you to do an extra point of damage once a day.

The battle begins. Each of you call out what damage you are doing so the other player can keep track. "Two!" yells the goblin. "One!" you reply, saving up your proficiency for a really good hit.

The battle is exciting and ends with the goblin dying. You lean over him and say, "I search you." He hands you a few coppers and a strange, locked box he had on him. He also gives you an experience point chip. Not bad; only 19 more to go to make second level.

You then have to remove some of your own hit points from your badge. You took four points of damage, so you remove your two armor points and two of your body points. You only have four body points left; better find a healer quickly, or you may not be so lucky in your next battle.

If you die in battle or by execution, your character can then be resurrected by the Healers' Guild—assuming you have enough money to pay for it and made the arrangements beforehand! You have a limited number of resurrections based on your level; if you use them all up, then you are permanently dead and must start a new character.

. . . and getting healed

You walk into the tavern, which is busy as usual. The Ravenholte Troubadour's Guild is performing in a corner. And over there is the duke himself, sitting with Baron Kent and Lord Montfern! They seem to be arguing over something; it must be important, given how many other people are sitting nearby pretending they're not listening.

You find a spot to sit. Eleni, the tavernkeeper, brings you an ale for a copper. (It's actually a soft drink, of course; alcohol is not allowed at NERO events.) You see a healer nearby and quickly introduce yourself. She says her name is Lita. You ask her for a healing spell.

There are no clerics in the NERO game world; NERO does not have religions. Healers are assumed to get their spells from the power of the Earth itself, and mages get theirs from the movements of the stars. Spells in a NERO game are performed by throwing a small packet of corn starch wrapped in a tissue while saying an incantation. The corn-starch "dart" is used so that everyone can tell if you have been hit by the spell. In the middle of a battle, if

you hear a mage yell, "I call upon the dragon's breath!" and then see a dart coming your way, try to dodge it! If it hits anything in your possession, you have taken the damage from the spell. If it misses, you have made your "saving throw." If the mage says the incantation incorrectly, however, the spell doesn't work and you are safe even if the powder dart did hit you.

Lita the healer states that such a spell would cost five coppers. You tell her you only have three and she accepts it, but tells you that you then owe her a favor if she ever asks it. You agree, and she casts the spell, saying, "I call upon rest and warmth to cure light wounds." She then breaks a powder packet on your shirt. (It is necessary for her to break the package, because spell-casters are limited in how many spells they can cast a day, and this is a way of keeping track of how many have been used.) She gives you two body-point dots for your badge.

Treasure beckons

As you are getting healed, a fighter in chain mail comes up to both of you. With her is a venerable mage with a long beard and a rather shifty-looking individual. They introduce themselves to you and Lita, and you all talk for a while about your pasts. The fighter then states that she has heard that the goblins have hidden some treasure nearby and that the goblin leader has a map of the spot. She suggests going out in a group and searching for the goblin encampment in the woods.

Should you tell her of the box you have? Perhaps there's a clue inside! You finally decide that they can be trusted, and you suggest that they go someplace where no one can overhear you. You all travel to the mage's cabin, where you show the box to the shifty person, who turns out to be a "locksmith" (or so he says). He smiles and pulls out his tools.

In the world of NERO, real locks are

used. Buying the required "Pick Locks" skill does not guarantee success at opening locks; it only allows you to make the attempt. The boxes are trapped with electronic buzzers. In order to "check for traps," you actually do just that by opening it slightly, seeing if any wires or devices are inside, and somehow "defusing" the trap before opening the box.

The rogue picks the lock, then successfully disarms the trap inside. Inside the box is a game card that explains what kind of trap was present and how much damage you would have taken had it not been disarmed. There's also a strange amulet, a few copper pieces, and a map!

Tomorrow, you will go to the pawn shop to have your amulet appraised for its value. You will also go to the Mage's Guild and have it identified to see if it's magical. However, you spend most of the night decoding the map. (Outside the mage's cabin, you hear the sounds of battle, as a lich has called forth his undead to destroy as much of the town as possible. You decide that the knights can handle it and wisely stay inside.)

After you decode the map, you notice a small note at the bottom that says "See a marshal when you're ready to go on this adventure." You decide to rest for the night and start in the morning. You head for bed with visions of treasure and adventures.

On to bigger things

This is just one way that a group may get into a module. Some modules are repeating, in that more than one group can go through them; others are one-time-only modules, which are usually major ones because they can affect the big plot.

Another way to get into modules is to be hired by the Adventurers' Guild, which might then send you out to escort a merchant through hostile territory or deliver a message to a diplomat at court. All of these things could easily lead to an adventure.

Some players aren't interested in modules at all and prefer to be townspeople who can sell information or just run their shops. The town of Ravenholt includes a bakery, a restaurant, a tavern, a clothing store, an armorer, a weaponsmith, and many other shops that add to the atmosphere and fun of the game. In addition, there is the nobility, which rarely goes on modules as they are too busy dealing with their own subplots. If you wish to be a townspeople, all you have to do is ask.

Players who show great role-playing and leadership skills may be asked to take on positions of nobility when those positions become available. Sometimes they refuse, preferring to work behind the scenes.

NERO games and live-action games like them are certainly the next wave of role-playing games. A NERO event trusts and depends on the fairness of its players (those who cheat are discovered and kicked out easily enough), and it is unlike any other live role-playing game out there. If you would like more information about NERO, write to: NERO, c/o the Gamemaster, 3 Lake Street, Arlington MA 02174, or call (617) 641-1580. NERO can also be reached through the ARGUS computer network at: (617) 674-2345 (300-2400 baud, 8-0-1 standard setting). Type in "Go NERO."



Get Your Priorities Straight!

by Royce Wicks

My son and his friends play a combat role-playing game whose rules they have worked out over the summer months. He tells me that the great thing about their game is that the characters don't have to bother about alignment.

Maybe I should be appalled at this next generation of gamers. But who can blame them when the alignment element of the AD&D® game has never been articulated to the point of being playable? Paladins romp with thieves and look askance at the latter's indiscretions, although they give an occasional high-and-mighty lecture to a quick-fingered fellow who only wants to pursue happiness as he sees fit. A party of mixed classes blurs the individual characters' alignments, which mutates into the ethos of the character with the loudest mouth, usually a lawful-good type.

Is it important? Emphatically, yes. Otherwise, our characters are nothing more than Colonel Mustards and Miss Scarletts chasing the dastardly Professor Plums. The AD&D game remains a character-development game, and alignment must contribute to the joy of creating highly developed characters. By using guidelines set forth here, you can make your next lawful-good character far different than the one you played last year.

An earlier article, "For King and Country" in DRAGON® issue #101, deals well in offering perspectives for fulfilling the descriptions of the varying alignments. And the AD&D 2nd Edition *Player's Handbook* again offers descriptions. Neither, however, solves the problem.

You can't play descriptions. You can't play evil, you can't play good, you can't play lawful, and you can't play chaotic. In the best traditional teaching of Russian

actor-director Stanislavsky, you must play objectives. The villain—whether on stage, in a novel, in a movie, or in the AD&D game—cannot know that he is the villain; he can only know what his objectives are in the given circumstances. This is also true for heroic types, who become terribly obnoxious and melodramatic when they know some deity is hanging over them.

As you will see, the principles proposed here are not one more set of tables to deal with. They have several advantages, the chief of which is that they offer a dynamic to a game that grew heavy with statistics over the years. A close reading of the AD&D 2nd Edition volumes emphasizes this very notion: play the dynamics of the game, not the statistics only.

The only solution is to provide each character with a value system, a creed. Generally, the dynamic between good and evil is one between selflessness and selfishness (i.e., loyalty and unreliability) set in a social hierarchy, while that between law and chaos is between nature and luck. Consequently, the rules here have three parts, regarding: 1) loyalty to either a social hierarchy or to superstitious beliefs; 2) expression of those loyalties and beliefs; and 3) the effects of experience on a character's beliefs.

Lawfulness is next to...

All lawful alignments base their loyalty on seven hierarchical elements. In the order required of the lawful-good paladin, they are: Deity, Sovereign, Homeland, Comrades (the adventuring party), Race, Family (or clan), and Self.

Suborders exist within several of these. The Deity has servants of various ranks, as does the Sovereign (a beginning paladin is normally ignorant of all the political subdivisions that will eventually make demands on his services). Guildmasters, mages, and high priests also may fall under the general category of Sovereign. Simply because a character has risen in level above a former guildmaster does not cancel his social obligation to him; those obligations accumulate. Homeland represents a character's home terrain and its boundaries. A mountain peak, river, or species of animal

or flora may require the character's attention, protection, or preservation. Homeland boundaries change, too, as the character ventures through the world and sees the arbitrary lines one society uses to wall off another. Neither do Comrades receive equal attention. Within an adventuring party, affection and concern wax and wane for all sorts of reasons. Race and Family will develop similar affections or disaffections.

Other lawful alignments also have these seven elements in their loyalty hierarchy, but the player is allowed to reorder some elements. Lawful-good characters are required to keep Sovereign, Comrades, Race, and Self in the above order, but must slot other elements like this: Deity above Comrades, Family below Comrades, and Homeland anywhere.

Thus, in a party of nothing but lawful-good characters, those characters might resolve moral dilemmas according to at least 42 moral priorities! All depends on the expression of those priorities, but let's continue with the loyalty hierarchy.

Lawful-evil characters order these four elements top to bottom: Self, Sovereign, Race, Family. Then they must slot Comrades above Race, Homeland below Sovereign, and Deity anywhere.

The lawful-neutral character must slot Comrades in the middle position and may slot the other six elements as he pleases, so long as it does not create an alignment that could be construed as lawful good or lawful evil. The easiest way for the DM to begin checking for a false hierarchy here is by comparing the four required elements in lawful-good and lawful-evil alignments to the player's selection. Similarly, the player can save the DM the trouble by creating a lawful-neutral alignment by altering the four elements at the outset.

Neutrality is fun

The beloved neutral alignments are so loved because players traditionally perform nearly any reprehensible moral action they please with these characters. However, neutrality under these new rules requires neutral characters to take action rather than avoid it. No more "follow the leader" for these troops. The general rule is that the neutral good, true neutral, and neutral evil beings differ from their lawful counterparts only in that they observe at least three **but not more than four of the** hierarchy's elements.

A neutral-good character thus begins with a lawful-good arrangement but moves three or four of the elements to the bottom of the priorities list as equally unimportant (they effectively fall off the

list). Some enormously diverse characters might emerge from the neutral-good characters you now know. Brutus the warrior might see his priorities as Comrades, Race, and Self (ignoring the rest); Sasha the cleric sees hers as Sovereign, Homeland, Deity, and Family. Most of us would have trouble with Sasha since she has no consideration for the party; still, no one could deny that there is something good about her. Self, if present, always comes last in any arrangement.

The true-neutral character places Self at the center of his hierarchy and observes at least two but not more than three additional elements above or below Self, in keeping with the general rule on the neutral alignments mentioned before. Other elements are equally unimportant. How does this effect my druid, you ask? Most druids are played as nothing more than medieval environmentalists, and repeated playing of the characters in this way is quite frankly a bore. Druids are nature priests. Their intelligence and wisdom give them a special relationship to the world around them; nonetheless, their priestly roles might be seen as ministering in some biased order to a social hierarchy. And don't misread the first sentence here: Self is only at the middle of the hierarchy; the character is not self-centered.

The neutral-evil character evolves as the neutral-good character does. Thus, the neutral-evil character is simply a lawful-evil character who ignores three or four of the social hierarchy's elements. Self is always present and always comes first. Sir Grinkle the paladin may decide that Angus the rogue, with a loyalty order of Sovereign, Comrades, and Race, is not much different than many of the lawful-good personalities he knows. Perhaps he thinks Angus is merely careless or lacking the knowledge, training, and personal charm that only a paladin could have. That is the way naive paladins think, isn't it? Clever Angus, however, has merely disguised his ultimate motivation to give himself power; Self actually came in first.

Anarchy rules

Let's take a look at the chaotics. Chaotic personalities view other hierachal elements as unnecessary social contrivances, thinking that no one is better than anyone else. They therefore have no social hierarchy. Deity, Sovereign, Homeland, Comrades, Race, and Family are either coequally important or unimportant; Self goes either above, on the same level as, or below these factors.

The chaotic-good character places Self one slot below these other elements present, which all become important but in no particular order. Though he likes Comrades, this character is likely to ignore every request his friends make once he returns to his farm (Homeland) or encounters his long-lost sister (Family). His sister might tell him that his friends need him more, but the only way you'll get him

out of his home is to gag and tie him.

The chaotic-neutral being is particularly careless. He may be of some help to the party, but he shifts his loyalty between Self and the other elements. If he is sometimes good to his friends, he may appear to be chaotic good. But the chaotic-neutral being wants a little something for himself that nobody else has. Turning your back on him only reminds him of this.

The chaotic-evil personality assumes only one element: Self. The other elements are unimportant and are used only to gratify the Self. The wily chaotic-evil character might fool some of the party some of the time by appearing to be some other personality. Before long, however, anyone can see this character seeks only self gratification.

Obviously, this whole setup looks more problematic for the lawful beings. It's not. Here is the flip side.

Truth or superstition?

Chaotic and neutral beings, unlike lawful ones, have principles or superstitions. (One man's principle is another's superstition.) There are seven categories of superstitions that regard:

1. the actions and responses of the deities;
2. the movements of the land, heaven, or seas;
3. the ingestion of (or abstinence from)

certain foods or drink;

4. the adornment of armor or apparel;
5. the association with a particular race, class, or sex;
6. the favored (or unfavored) use of a weapon or spell; and
7. any mystical symbol, color, number, shape, plant, mineral, or spell.

Beings of chaotic alignments have one principle/superstition from each of these categories. Those who are neutral have three or four, such that the number of lawful elements plus the number of chaotic principles/superstitions equals seven. What distinguishes chaotic-good beings from chaotic-evil ones is that the formers believe their superstitions/principles ensure them of good luck; they live charmed lives. Those who are evil believe they live cursed lives, so most of their superstitions/principles are meant to prevent bad fortune. However, a chaotic-good character always begins with one superstition/principle that prevents bad luck. Conversely, the chaotic-evil character has one that he believes brings him good luck. (A chaotic-neutral being believes that roughly half of his beliefs bring him good luck and the others prevent bad.) Unfortunately for the chaotic character, luck is not guaranteed by these often nonsensical and arbitrary beliefs. Principles held through many battles over many years may not hold up, and his value system may create



its own moral dilemmas.

The neutral characters can be handled in much the same way. Neutral-good beings with four superstitions/principles have a three-for-one split regarding good and bad fortune; neutral-evil beings have just the opposite. The true neutral will see it equally. Those who must add three superstitions/principles have a two-for-one split, with the true neutral getting a choice on his viewpoint.

Your new objectives

This part of these rules concerns the creed's expression as character objectives. The principles and superstitions work as effective character objectives on their own. Principles ordinarily become a part of a character's daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly routine. Superstitions arise spontaneously according to the encounter and the deviousness of the DM.

The lawful loyalties, however, require demonstration by promise or oath. Tributes, sacrifices, quests, services, taxes, and time obligations are the usual demonstrations of loyalty. In return, the character expects to profit with protection, training, comfort, collegiality, rank, honor, and wealth. Thus, the character must state how his loyalty is expressed.

Let's make an example. Dwinmar, a dwarven thief, is neutral evil. He observes four loyalties and three superstitions. He orders his four loyalties as: Self, Deity, Race, Family. He expresses his loyalties by: 1) acquiring one handcrafted item of jewelry each month; 2) invoking his deity's name whenever slaying orcs; 3) compulsively spitting on all half-orcs he encounters; and 4) feasting with his clan for three days whenever he's in town. His "principles" lead him to believe that 5) circles bring good fortune, 6) the gods disfavor animal sacrifice, and 7) adventuring during a full moon is bad luck.

Each character, growing in power and experience, inevitably has new honors heaped upon him and new insights to use against foes, and perhaps new fears as well. With each rise in experience level, a chaotic character acquires a new obligation; neutral characters gain a new obligation every odd-numbered level. A chaotic character with more than one class has one obligation per level for each class other than the one in which he has the highest potential progression; for example, for an elven fighter/thief/wizard, the wizard class is the one in which the highest level can be obtained (15th). Neutral characters gain one additional obligation for every odd-numbered level other than the one with the highest potential progression.

The obligation gained should come naturally out of the game's events. Special attachments may form for a dagger because it saved the character's life. Being overrun by hobgoblins wearing red helms might create a character's fear for that color. The honor heaped upon an elven warrior by his chieftain may require sea-

sonal visits to his homeland. To maintain her new clerical spell power, a priestess may be required to fast every five days, causing her to be weaker or slower on those days.

Continuing our earlier example, by the time Dwinmar the dwarf reaches eleventh level, he: 8) requires a seasonal boar hunt for personal relaxation; 9) learns that a nonmagical weapon in any backstab attempt will be unlucky; 10) pays a semi-annual honorarium to an order of dwarven clerics that *raised* him from the dead; 11) believes circles with jewels encrusted inside are unlucky; and 12) thinks eating fish brings good luck. Note again that as Dwinmar rose in level, the ratio of bad-luck to good-luck tenets remains roughly the same as he began with. Furthermore, his social obligations at #8 and #10 are extensions of Self and Deity, not inclusions of social orders he doesn't recognize.

Obviously, each additional tenet added to a character's value system creates new obligations-sometimes conflicting ones. Experience becomes no longer the acquisition of new power alone, but of new responsibilities. A 10th-level chaotic character will be saddled with 16 obligations pulling him this way and that (he'd have seven or eight if he were neutral). A neutral 10th-level fighter/9th-level cleric would have 12 or 13 tenets, but a chaotic

one would face 25! The poor fellow will have to retire just to keep his sanity. However, some tenets can be mere exceptions to originally held beliefs, to avoid unnecessary complications.

The DM is advised to have a few stock creeds to begin each new character. Thereafter, each new tenet will most likely arise in play during crisis situations. It is more helpful in this way for the player to retain the character's history. Taking on a new tenet need not be tied with a rise in class level, but the player might be given additional experience points for taking on new restrictions before his character's level changes.

Both the DM and the player should agree on the nature of each new tenet. Above all, it should be playable. If a fighter agrees to train cadets for his liege in the winter months, but the party never goes adventuring in the winter, he has no real obligation. On the other hand, if the same fighter accepts betrothal to his sovereign's niece when she comes of age in five years, this single promise creates a constant pressure on the character toward his future in-laws.

Conclusion

First of all, this optional alignment system does not create excess baggage. Like the social and cultural rules that guide our own lives, these playing objectives remain



an undercurrent in the character's life. They create specific moments in the campaign that will individualize play. Thus, when the party decides to don clerical capes to disguise their journey into a temple, Karlon the wizard decides wearing any blue clothing is bound to bring disaster upon the group. He may be right. He won't know unless he sticks by his beliefs.

Such moments are unlikely to come at every encounter, and it would be foolish to load up a campaign with moral conflicts. A test is necessary only for a player who insists on playing his current character in the same manner as a recently deceased one. Other occasions are those where the player is fond of playing only a single character class. When he starts his "new" character, it is amazingly, boringly similar to his last one, even though the ability scores indicate a difference. Obviously, moral conflicts are important for advanced characters prone to abusing their wide-ranging powers.

Another point is that characters might change alignment more subtly under these guidelines. By forsaking obligations or ignoring beliefs, the character may find he's not gaining experience as quickly as others. A visit with his liege or mentor may then disclose that he is not living up to his alignment. He then ought to either face up to meeting those beliefs or make alignment changes as necessary to coincide with his moral priorities.

On the other hand, sudden alignment changes caused by magical or spiritual intervention will not ordinarily attract the party's sudden attention. The player makes a quick review of his character's tenets, reorders the priorities, and plays them. It is not necessary to sound the alarm by immediately playing like a madman. A magically changed alignment ordinarily causes initial confusion, and new loyalties or sentiments relative to good and bad luck change slowly, round by round. From personal experience, I can say it makes great fun. It usually takes the other players time to figure out what has happened. They are uncertain of the cause of the alignment change or if indeed an alignment shift has happened.

A corollary to this is that character-class changes under these guidelines preserve much of the character. The character will not be defined simply by what tasks he performs for the party but by his creed, beliefs, and loyalties. When the priority of those tenets changes, he may have lost some character-class powers but gained either new freedom or greater responsibilities. Not a bad deal.

The character's creed reflects his cosmic attitude, which is buffeted by numerous loyalties or animosities. The character might be obliged to honor his father, but if his father leaves the family gold to an

aimless brother or fiendish cleric, the character faces a dilemma with his creed and blood ties. Similarly, a dwarf, naturally hating an elf, may in one adventure come to owe the elf his life. However, when the dwarf's clan elder notes that this adventuring companionship violates the clan's creed, the dwarf faces a dilemma that no self-respecting DM will allow to go unresolved. The dwarf will be made to pay. Loyalties and animosities will be found everywhere between families, clans, villagers, guild members, religious orders, sage and student, and—of course—alignments.

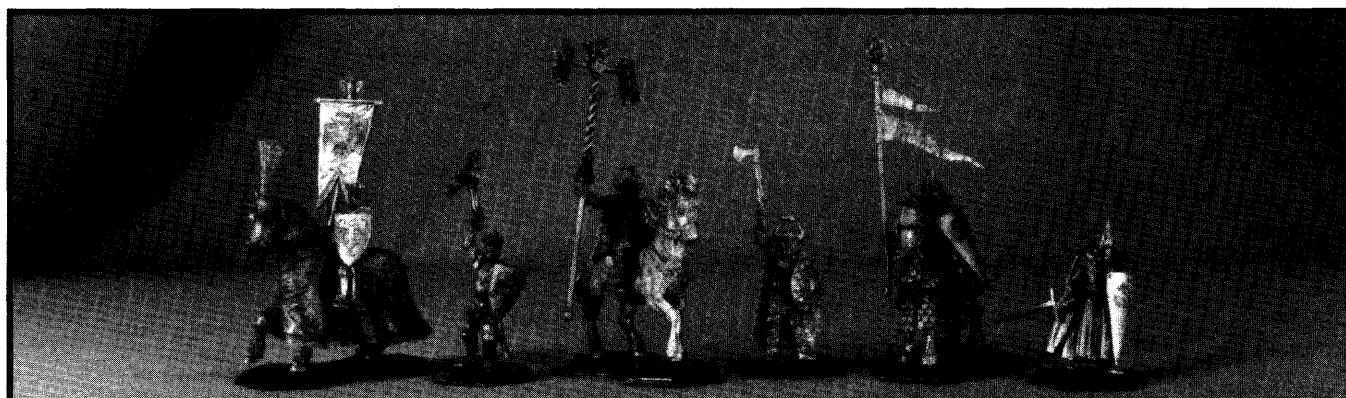
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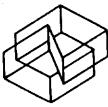
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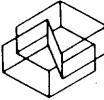
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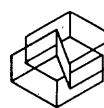


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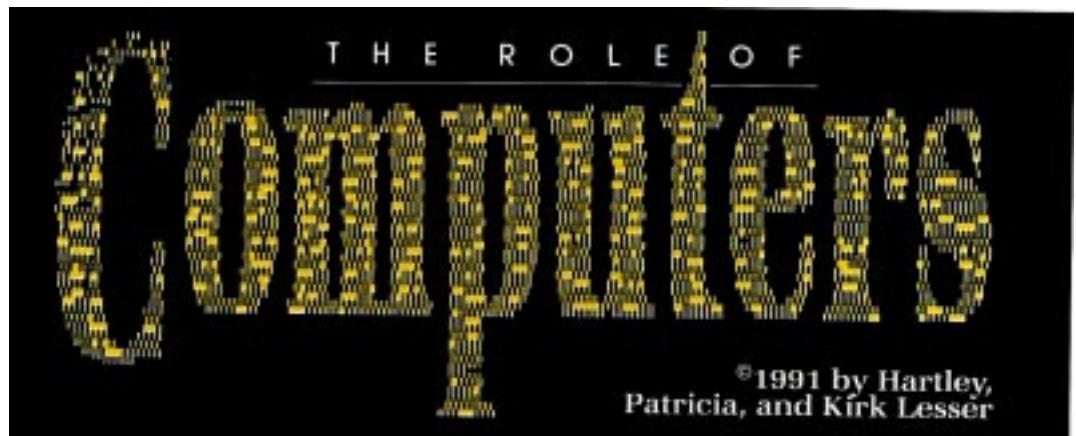
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Death Knights of Krynn (SSI)

Lord Soth is back—and you've got to stop him!

Reviews

Death Knights of Krynn *****
Strategic Simulations, Inc. (415-571-7171)
PC/MS-DOS version \$49.95

When we received *Death Knights of Krynn* (DKK), we were more than a little concerned. After all, we had just reviewed SSI's *Eye of the Beholder*, with its advanced user interface and rules based on the AD&D® 2nd Edition game. How could we possibly return to the older user system, with its continuous need to access a command menu structure?

We did so quite easily, in fact. It was wonderful to return to the lands of the DRAGONLANCE® saga and continue the adventures started in SSI's *Champions of Krynn* (CK). Lord Soth is back with a vengeance! The by-now familiar interface has become almost second nature, and SSI has added some enhancements to the play

of the game. For example, should you wish to bring into DKK a character from your CK game, he retains all of his items and cash. Plus, DKK offers you the chance to raise your characters to higher levels, and you have several new spells for your mages and clerics.

You have returned to Gargath Outpost to celebrate the first anniversary of the victory at the Battle of Kernen in CK. You play newly rolled characters or imported

CK adventurers. To accomplish the latter, have CK on your hard disk drive so that DKK can easily access the saved game code.

Those wonderful characters from CK are all here, although Sir Karl is no longer alive. At the celebration, Lady Maya (she's actually a silver dragon, remember?) is eulogizing Sir Karl, her lover. Suddenly, thunderheads amassed overhead, and small specks detach themselves from the clouds. They increase in size and turn into a death dragon accompanied by several beasties. And there, riding the death dragon, is Sir Karl—but he's dead! Seems as though Sir Karl has been unearthed by Lord Soth to bring more warriors into the undead realm. Former Solamnic Knights are now becoming Death Knights.

The undead Karl grabs the Dragonlance it took you forever to attain in CK, and he heads away with Maya in hot pursuit. The

Computer games' ratings

X	Not recommended
*	Poor
**	Fair
***	Good
****	Excellent
*****	Superb

other foes before you are far from ready to leave; they want you dead. Battle is joined, and other Solamnic Knights rush to your aid. If you are using characters from CK, we hope they are of high-enough level to withstand the assaults of the undead and their beasties. We preferred to create new characters, as DKK starts them out at about the fifth or sixth level of experience, depending upon such factors as multiple classes.

Our group, which has done extraordinarily well so far, started with the following characters (their levels are indicated in parentheses): a cleric/ranger (5/5), a fighter/red mage (6/5), a Knight of the Rose (5), a cleric/fighter/white mage (5/5/4), a cleric/fighter/red mage (5/5/4), and a cleric/thief (5/6). Obviously, the majority of our adventurers are Qualinesti or Silvanesti elves, with a single human (the knight) and a kender (the thief). We have currently completed about 60% of the game, and our characters are now at ninth level and are about to reach tenth level.

Clerics are obviously needed as you pursue your quarry and are pursued. Forewarned is forearmed. We strongly advise that a couple of your characters memorize a Resist Fire spell for your first encounter; rerolled characters will be able to cast it on individual party members before your wizard casts a Fireball to rid the screen of the nightmarish enemy before you.

Should you survive the first battle, we also recommend those characters with clerical abilities memorize their healing spells. There's a temple scenario that will ask you to use your healing skills on those who were wounded in the first battle. Should you decide to help, a special AC -1 ring will be received as your reward. Give it to the character with the lowest number of hit points.

The knights' commander is Sir Bertil, and you'll find him talking to a less-than-enthusiastic Sir Garren. Garren is carrying Karl's old sword, but he doesn't agree with the decisions being made by Bertil. Your interruption hasn't helped.

Bertil gives you three choices of an assignment. We took the temple assignment to help bury the dead, but the dead tried to bury us. Success in all DKK encounters requires a goodly amount of concentrated magic and powerful fighting skills. As you proceed through the encounters, you'll eventually be asked to find the Sleepstone, held by a dream merchant in Kalaman. Your journey anywhere outside city or fortress walls is plagued by encounters. Most of the outdoor encounters involve the undead, so make certain your party has clerics who can turn them.

If you find your characters cannot survive the first outdoor encounters in the mountains north of Galgarth, try moving your party as far to the east as possible. Then move north toward Dargaard and Kalaman. You should be able to avoid combat.



Death Knights of Krynn (SSI)

You might also find that recuperating and memorizing spells in Vingard Keep is difficult to accomplish. Find a workshop and try resting there. One of the more interesting side jaunts you'll take is to find a young knight. He holds the key to a lot of information that revolves around the High Clerists' Tower to the west. First, you must buy a candle and go through red doorways hunting this individual. If you find yourself delayed or take the wrong turn, you'll never succeed. Avoid messages that advise trying a door, concentrate solely on the red doors. And make certain you undertake this quest early in the day. Otherwise, you'll find yourself involved in noisy bars that can leave you with confrontation after confrontation.

Some final words of warning. Don't enter Throtl Keep until your characters are of a high-enough level to withstand multiple assaults of powerful undead and mages. In the High Clerists' Tower, in the vaults, make certain you Fix, Save, and then Memorize after each battle. You never know, when the undead might decide to interrupt your rest periods.

The fighting is almost nonstop as you try to prevent Seth's minions from taking Sturm's body out of the tower along with the bodies of other knights. Save Sir Durfey, and he joins your adventuring party. If you are winning the day, you'll eventually run into an old acquaintance who is responsible for the undead knowing a great deal about the tower.

DKK is a great deal of fun and packed with excitement. Again, your greatest tool is to Save, Save, Save. Additional game details are received by reading the entries in the Adventurer's Journal when asked to do so by an NPC. The Adventurer's Jour-

nal also contains a complete description of all clerical, druidic, and mage spells. There are descriptions of the beasties you'll encounter in DKK and many important gaming tables.

Yet again, SSI continues to hold the interest of gamers by releasing top-notch fantasy role-playing adventures. The AdLib and CMS sound-board support is minimal at best in DKK (we used AdLib, with VGA graphics). However, this may be a blessing. Many computer games now feature far too much in the way of music and sound effects, and such can destroy concentration and playing mood. We definitely recommend DKK to fantasy role-playing gamers. We can't wait for the next volume!

Space Quest IV

Sierra On-Line (209-683-4468)

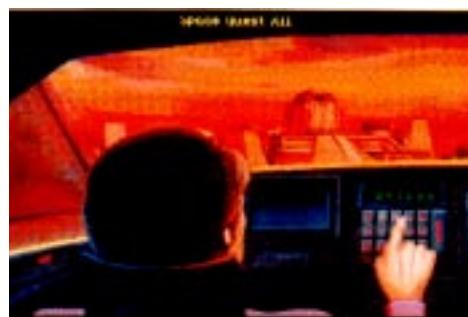
PC/MS-DOS version

\$59.95

Roger Wilco has returned, this time with his son. Wilco Junior has been taken prisoner in *Space Quest XII*, and Wilco Senior must save him by using a time machine while he's being hunted by the Sequel Police! This adventure will send Roger into parts known and unknown, as he zips around and through *Space Quests I-XII*.

The humor in this graphic adventure is brilliant. Sierra's attention to detail is meticulous, down to the scene-stealing, drum-beating rabbit commercial that plays on the names of famous stores and software. The animation and music are of typical Sierra quality: amazing. We never had to use paper and pencil for mapping, and the point-and-click commands are easy to use.

Sierra uses its icon-driven system, such as the one in *King's Quest V*, to make the game simple to operate. By clicking on the



Space Quest IV (Sierra On-Line)

right mouse button, the cursor changes into various icons that can be used on Roger or the surrounding scenery. Clicking the left mouse button causes Roger to perform the icon-designated action. A system icon allows you to adjust the detail level of the game for slower or faster machines, the volume, and the speed at which the characters move and talk. Games can also be loaded, saved, quit, or restarted. This type of command system has been criticized as it limits the actions characters can perform, but we feel it is appropriate as gamers of all ages will want to play *Space Quest IV*.

We continue to find challenges in this game that requires wits as active as Roger Wilco's mouth. There is also an arcade scene that requires deft motor skills. For those of us with less manual dexterity, the arcade sequence can be bypassed without affecting the outcome of the game. Now, that's a thoughtful touch!

Space Quest IV is an enjoyable game. The attention to detail and humor are outstanding, and the graphics' detail and music must be envied by other game publishers. The icon system is excellent. Timing is everything in this game. If you find a puzzle to be particularly frustrating, complete your actions in a different order. We were stuck once, but switching the order of our tasks allowed us to continue. *Space Quest IV* is a great addition to a great series of games. This review was made using MIDI sound and VGA graphics.

Zarlor Mercenary

Atari (phone number n/a)
Atari Lynx version

Price n/a
Do you want to destroy things, and lots

of them? If you answered yes, try your hand at *Zarlor Mercenary*. This is a vertical-view shoot-'em-up that allows you to blow up everything you want. Great animation and detailed backgrounds make this game a real winner for Lynx owners.

The object is to fly over six different terrains, blowing away buildings, aircraft, and vehicles. Your ship is equipped with a shield that can withstand multiple hits, and you've got some outstanding weaponry. If you deplete your shields energy, one of your four available ships is lost. Destroying enemies gives you zarbits, the currency used in this game. Zarbits can be traded at the end of the current level to purchase items at a shop. You can buy megabombs that destroy everything on the screen, powerful lasers, back shooters, wing cannons, side shooters, speed-ups, power-ups, and even extra ships. Sometimes, enemies lose an item that you can pick up and use. At the shop, you can trade in any of these items for zarbits as well.

Up to four players can join in, making this game really exciting. However, with that many people assisting you, *Zarlor Mercenary* removes extra ships from play. Two players will get three ships each, while three or more players get only two ships each.

Before the game begins, each player can choose a personality that is minutely detailed and has a special weapon, such as a laser, or side shooter. Players can team up to complete the six missions. Should a player not believe in teamwork, a sudden blast from another player's back shooter can "urge" him back into playing fair.

Zarlor Mercenary is a great multiplayer

game with hard-core action that makes sure you will play this game many times. There is plenty of space to be covered, and an enemy or item missed during one game session can be found during another turn at the Lynx. This is the first shoot-'em-up on a portable game system we have seen that enables four people to play simultaneously. Atari has done a good job of not losing game playability as a result of so much interfacing by the players. If you're tired of "brain drain" games, this is a good game to purchase to destroy worlds at home or in the car.

Queries and comments

The number of respondents coming to the aid of readers who queried us regarding how to best the Mulmaster Beholder Corps in SSI's *Curse of the Azure Bonds* was phenomenal.

Your attack should take place after two bonds have been removed, but before the game is completed. All of the hints indicate that you should save the Dust of Disappearance that you obtain from the vault within the Fire Knives' hideout beneath the City of Tilverton. You should also hang onto other goodies such as Ice Storm, Fire Shield, Lightning Bolts, and Fireball spells. It's also not a bad idea to have a scroll or two of the Haste spell.

You must quickly eliminate the beholder who protects the entrance to the Corps. To defeat the Mulmaster Beholder Corps, all of your characters must be healthy. Just prior to entering the Corps, cast Haste and Enlarge on your finest fighters, as well as Bless and Prayer. Use the Dust of Disappearance to make your party invisible; then go in and throw caution to the wind.

move past them. Concentrate your fighters on one beholder at a time, while inflicting damage on the dark-elf lords and the priests through spells cast by your mages. Once the beholders have been slain, attack the remaining dark-elf lords, then the rakshasa. Use your fighters against the latter, as spells are ineffective against these beasties.

This battle is going to require about an hour or so of time. However, it is certainly worth the effort. Each member of your successful party will earn about 75,000 XP. The beholders also have +4 long swords, and the drow lords have +2 shields, +5 drow long swords, and +5 drow chain mail.

After you have taken care of the treasure screens, go to the opposite side of the room and go through the door. Pass through the next door, and you will be in yet another treasure room stocked with magical items. Don't Encamp in the treasure room, as wandering monsters will enter. As Rodger Wenzlaff of Yankton, S.D., said, this battle "was easier than killing an unarmed kobold with a 10th-level paladin using a +5 Holy Avenger sword." Yeah, right!

Kyle Erickson of Cavalier, N.D., was the first to write to us with helpful hints for our readers. Other early respondents who added to the information include: Glenn Sutton of Circleville, Ohio; Sean Wallenbeck of Rome, N.Y.; R. Stephan Roberts of Lompoc, Calif.; Hans Cummings of Petersburg, Va.; and Bruce Gebhart of Pierce, Idaho.

And now, a cry of despair:

"I desperately need help with *The Bard's Tale II*. I have three sections of the wand, but I can't even get into the Destiny Stone dungeon because I don't know the answer to the riddle. In the Grey Crypt, I can't get to the second level and I don't know why. In the Tower of Dargoth, I am tearing my hair out trying to figure out the last four words to the code ("reverse tiny and late," no. seven.).

Let's get cooking on this query and help out Jon Timmons of Philadelphia, Penn. Send your answers to our address at the end of the column.

The second query this month comes from Jason Dunn of Calgary, Alberta, regarding *Ultima VI*. "This is by far the best game I have ever played, but it is also the hardest. I cannot find anyone or any thing that represents Diligence in the Shrine of Diligence. It's all monsters! I have tried Seance spells on most of the monsters, but that didn't work. And I always get "No Response" when I try to converse with them. I know that Exodus best represents Diligence, but I cannot find him in the Shrine. Thanks to anyone who can offer me the aid I need."

Clue corner

The Bard's Tale I (Electronic Arts)

1. Seek the Eye deep in the Catacombs by defeating the spectre before entering Kylearen's Tower.

2. For bundles of experience points for parties with Mangar's Mind Blade, seek the robed men in Harkyn's Castle on the third level.

3. To enter Mangar's Tower, one must obtain the onyx key from Kylearen.

4. High-level characters are best off fighting vampires and other creatures that decrease the characters' amount of levels, because it will require fewer experience points to advance levels without losing hit points.

5. Seek the master key to pass through Mangar's gates.

6. To find the lost stairs leading to the fourth level of Mangar's Tower, teleport to +4 north, +10 east, and +2 up. Then answer the Magic Mouth: Lie With Passion And Be Forever Damned. Then, teleport to +5 north and -7 east. The stairs should be there.

7. Seek the stairs leading under the gates of Mangar's Tower deep in the fourth level below the tavern.

8. Do not fight basilisks. They are not worth the experience points earned for defeating them.

9. Seek the Crystal Sword on the first level of Harkyn's Castle to defeat the Crystal Golem in Kylearen's Tower.

Peter Robbins and Dan Liffmann
Andover MA

Citadel (PostCraft International)

1. In my opinion, the optimum party consists of two fighters, a cleric, and a wizard. Always have at least one dwarf, as they can see in near-dark conditions. This is handy if your torches get blown out. Also, one member of your party should be of neutral alignment, as he can handle evil items safely.

2. You enter the castle on the second level. Light your torches by holding them in front of a lit torch in a wall sconce. If you are in a part of the castle that has wall sconces, light a torch from a dying one and pass it to a party member. Always have one of your party member's hands free for this reason.

3. Never select Trance for a Wizards personal menu unless he is about to die. The temple cannot wake him, so your character will be asleep until your cleric is of a level high enough to cast an Awaken spell.

4. Once your Wizard has a spellbook, get him some ink and parchment. He can write scrolls and sell them at the store. This is very handy, as the dungeons are cash poor, and training costs a lot more at the higher levels.

5. The Open Portal spell works on walls as well as doors.

6. On level one, the skull door is a trap. Do not activate it unless you have a Levitas

spell cast on your party. Otherwise, you will drop through a pit to the second level. The secret passage on this level is accessible only by Open/Blast Portal spells or by the up staircase on level six. There is a one-way, secret door that is activated by standing next to the skeleton in the passageway. Leave one member of the party with the skeleton to hold the door open. The rest of the party can step into the doorway. There is a very good sword there. Grab it and back out of the doorway. Regain your party member, then poke the skeleton with the sword icon. Armor items can then be found.

Patrick M. Spera

APO New York

(serving in Saudi Arabia)

Eye of the Beholder (SSI)

1. Each level has a "beholder quest" that gives extra items or experience for success. On level five, the dwarven stronghold, put all your rations in the pantry; you can retrieve them when you are finished. On level six, the kenku level, put all the kenku eggs in the room marked "Nest."

2. The Wand of Silvas pushes Xanathar back one space and is the only magic that affects him.

3. To kill Xanathar, use the Wand of Silvas to push him into his own spike trap. Also remember that an invisible party doesn't trip eye beams.

4. On level four, when entering the room containing all of the sayings about the king, close the right and left doors. This will afford you a +3 battle axe, a real "drow cleaver."

The Lessers

Death Knights of Krynn (SSI)

1. After Lord Soth is defeated, you can enter the challenge in the northwest corner of the room.

2. In the challenge, there is the Black Pit. In the pit is the amulet and an infinite number of other treasures—if you survive the wail!

3. You will find it hard to survive the challenge without a thief.

4. You can find a Cloak of Displacement in Turef. You may be asked to find a dwarf in a purple hat. If you find the dwarf, wrestle him. Return him to his mother and receive your cloak.

Erik Moe
St. Louis MO

1. In Vingaard Keep, follow the first road to the left (east) to find the Dream Merchant. It is marked by a half-open eye. Follow the second road to the left (east) to buy a candle.

2. In the Dragon Pit, you can get Plate +3 and a Shield +2 in the shrine. You will get a dragonlance on the way out. Equip it immediately, because you will need it.

3. In the crazy dwarfs house, answer "water," "hands," and "ring." You will get a Mace +4 and a Girdle of Giant Strength (23).

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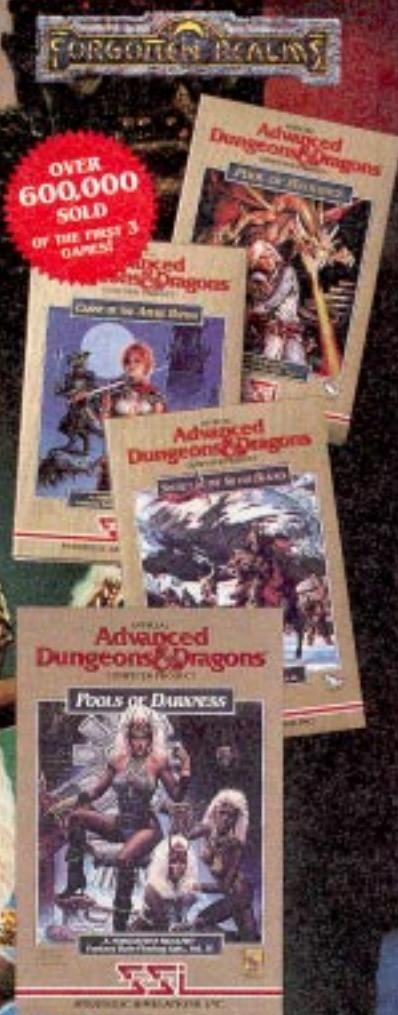
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4. You get the Rod of Omniscience in Voice Wood and a Mace of Disruption in Cerberus.

5. Use blunt weapons on the skeletal knights. The Mace of Disruption works very well.

6. In the final battle with Lord Soth, you face five Death Knights and five Iron Golems. I recommend Haste, Fire Resistance, and Globes of Invulnerability.

Mike Hamilton
Madison WI

1. Don't waste your magic on skeleton warriors.

2. There is a "training maze" in the mountains between Gargath and Throtl. To find it, walk south through the mountains and as close to them as possible.

3. There is a cursed pirate ship with great treasure aboard her. It is located on the far side of the lake near Kalaman.

Bob Nolan
Columbia MD

Dragon Wars (Interplay Productions)

1. In the slave estate, you will find Mog, a gaze demon, who loves art. Check for loose floor boards and secret doors. You can find mirrors and equip them to resist Mog's deadly gaze.

2. In Phoebus, go to the tavern and get Valar. He is a good friend and a sun magic-user, and he will be most beneficial. Outside the inn, you will find some wild dogs. Fight them to get past and obtain some treasure.

3. Don't enlist in the army.

4. Go to the temple and fight Stosstrupen and Mystalvision. You will certainly lose, but don't despair. You are thrown into jail. Keep moving in your cell to accumulate days. You will be held captive and then let out by a mysterious person. Search for the treasury. Oh, should you run into a dragon, let it be fed or it will destroy the city (we certainly can't have that!). Also, look for a shovel, as you will need it. After fighting Mystalvision, you will obtain some magical scrolls.

Lance Theaderman
Batavia OH

Dungeon Master (FTL Games)

1. If you happen to meet a monster behind a portcullis, don't open the portcullis! Instead, attack the monster with small missile weapons (arrows, rocks, stars, daggers). Sooner or later, these weapons will hit the creature. This tactic is quite effective for characters with high dexterity ratings.

2. Some spells for wizards: OH VEN—cloud poison; FUL IR—fireball; ZO—unlock; OH EW RA—clairvoyance; YA BRO ROS—footsteps (cast the spell, walk a few steps, then look behind you); OH KATH RA—lightning bolt; OH IR RA—advanced light spell.

3. Some spells for priests: YA IR—shield; FUL BRO NETA—fire shield; FUL BRO KU—strength potion; OH BRO ROS—

dexterity potion.

Ian Wojtowicz
Ottawa, Ontario

Gold of the Aztecs (U.S. Gold)

1. When you find yourself limbed by a tree in the first arcade sequence, simply cut yourself free by pressing the fire button. Once you reach ground level, walk to your right and exit. You don't have to get rid of anyone in this scene.

2. In the second scene, as soon as you've taken a couple of steps, somersault over the Bowman to avoid his arrows. We don't think you should take the time to slay this individual. Exit to the right.

3. The third scene is a little trickier. Stop and wait for the bird to swoop, then jump all the way to the other side of the screen. You'll find that this prevents the deadly plants from hurting you.

U.S. Gold

Kung-Fu Master (IREM America Corp.)

Chainsaw Freddy has some weak points. Although he is skilled with his chainsaw, he is vulnerable to Bruce Leap's squat and kick techniques. Wait in a squatting position until Freddy brings his chainsaw down twice, then raises it again.

The Lessers

Secret of the Silver Blades (SSI)

1. To gain experience, wander about the ruins many, many times before you start tracking Marcus and his bunch. You may stop when you have advanced two or three levels. However, before seeing Marcus, remember to buy lots of mirrors! Your characters lose lots of hit points if they are to be turned back to flesh.

2. In the mines (level 6), a nicely centralized Fireball spell will wipe out all of the lizardmen. Vala is in the cage. She isn't that great a fighter. I made the mistake of giving her the Eyes of Charming, and she spent entire fights using it on umber hulks (to no effect). Anyway, she went bonkers (perhaps it was something I did!), and I had to kill her.

3. A quick tip if you are playing only to win: There is a warning somewhere that if you play the game at novice level, your experience points will suffer. Nonsense! I started the game at Veteran level, but when I entered the dungeon and started facing pyrohydras, I switched to Novice level. (That means the monsters are killed with one Fireball spell.) Anyway, despite running half the game at Novice level, all my humans finished at level 15, which is the highest attainable in the game.

4. As training and healing are free, there are practically no expenses. At the end of it all, I had seven computer pages worth of magical items and something like 150 pieces of jewelry, five thousand gems, and 150,000 pieces of platinum. I tried to convert the platinum to gems and I wiped out the Vaults supply of same.

Ching Sann
Singapore

Ultima VI (Origin)

1. To get into the thieves' guild, either pickpocket Homer or Phoenix (the lady under Britain who has several glass swords, magic helms, and so on). Ask Homer about the pirates' treasure. To find this treasure, you must enter two of the three hardest dungeons: Destrad and the Pirates' Cave. Invisibility spells make Destrad easier. In the Pirates' Cave, constant healing helps.

2. Go as far to the left as you can on level one. Enter the maze, and explore the "off limits." Ignore the first clouds and, voilà! You've found the treasure.

3. Captain John is at the bottom of Hythloth, which is better accessed from the far southeast of the gargoyle world. Learn to speak gargoyle and join with Beh Lem. Most dungeons are marked on the map; just look harder for them.

Ian Rapley
Seer Green, Bucks, U.K.

In *Ultima VI*, at any point when you become frustrated, talk to Iolo. Ask him three times about "spam." Follow this up by asking him about "humbug" — not "humb," but "humbug."

Tom Heilman
Cupertino CA

War in Middle-earth (Melbourne House)

1. The Scepter of Annuminas is west of Annuminas, on the shore of the lake.

2. The Red Arrow is south of Mount Gram.

3. The Dwarven Ring is north of Dol Guldur.

4. The Silver Orb is in the ruins southeast of Mount Gundabad.

5. If you do not go through the forest between the Last Bridge and the Ford of Bruinen before you arrive at Rivendell, you can later add an extra member to your company.

6. After you enter the copy protection, you must press RETURN and the mouse button. If you do not do both, your game will freeze. Perhaps this is true only of my game version, which is on the Apple IIgs.

Sam Carter
Montara CA

A last note: The hints for *Champions of Krynn* in issue #170 were actually meant for *Pool of Radiance*. Sorry!

Recall those times you were stuck in a rotten dungeon, facing awesome foes with no idea as to what you should do? Save a hero-mail in a hint! Send your game tips, techniques, and hints to: The Lessers, 521 Czerny Street, Tracy CA 95376. Until next month, game on!



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SAGE ADVICE

by Skip Williams

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This month, the sage shares more insights into the workings of the gods in the AD&D® 2nd Edition game—and the workings of more mundane beings, such as player characters and monsters.

The introduction to the 2nd Edition *Legends & Lore* tome says deities are unable to visit the Prime Material plane, yet the Aztec deities are described as living on the Prime Material plane. Are they exceptions to the rule? Are these deities restricted to their home planets? If so, how can Quetzalcoatl keep his vow to return to the valley of Mexico? How can Ometeotl be barred from going anywhere if he's the embodiment of the universe? How can an

omnipotent deity such as this have such limits, and why would such a deity need an avatar? Tezcatlipoca is said to be unable to visit the Prime Material plane; isn't this another contradiction?

First, a careful rereading of page 6 of *Legends & Lore* will show that deities are not unable to visit the Prime Material plane, but they never do; this is because doing so automatically would draw the attention and ire of the other deities. No deity is inclined to risk destruction at the hands of his or her divine peers.

The Aztec deities section does seem to be a bit muddy, but less so if you assume the words "Prime Material Plane" actually mean "the planet where the campaign takes place" or "the valley of Mexico." Like beings in other pantheons, the Aztec deities are quite interested in mortal affairs and won't tolerate direct divine interference in them. Exactly how Quetzalcoatl will keep his vow is up to the DM. Perhaps the other deities will respect it and allow him to return, or perhaps Quetzalcoatl expects his followers to pave the way for him in such a way as the other deities cannot object.

If you carefully reread Ometeotl's section, you'll find he is the embodiment of the universe only in a sense, not literally. In any case, no deity in *Legends & Lore* is

omnipotent, not even in its own area of control. All deities share the limelight with other deity-class creatures who have the power to confound or even kill them. Avatars are handy for any deity, as an avatar can go places where the deity itself cannot go without recriminations. Also, note that deities can have multiple avatars working at different locations at the same time (10 avatars at once for a greater deity). Likewise, Tezcatlipoca is not *barred* from the mortal world any more than any other deity. He is in the habit of using his true form—rather than an avatar—to accomplish various tasks. However, he doesn't use his true form to visit the mortal world.

If deities never visit the Prime Material plane, how can the champion Iuz live on Oerth (in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK® setting)? I run a campaign based in Oerth, and Iuz is a major villain. With the appearance of the new *Legends & Lore* tome, do I remove Iuz from Oerth and from the game, or leave the demigod free to ravage the place? Do the new rules have information on cambions? Where do I find rules on Iuz's assassin abilities, or do they just disappear now that the new rules have come along?

Statistics for cambions are located in the *Monstrous Compendium*, Outer Planes appendix, under the heading "Tana'ri." If you decide to treat Iuz like any other deity and restrict his true form to another plane, you hardly remove him from play. As a demigod, he can have his worshipers or even his avatar do his dirty work. (Yes, I'm aware that the *GREYHAWK® Adventures* hardback says Iuz has no avatars, but if you're going to kick him off the Prime Material plane because of what *Legends & Lore* says, there's no reason you can't give him an avatar.) Note also that the *Legends & Lore* tome does not necessarily consider the way things work on Oerth; it is a general work describing how deity-class creatures fit into most campaigns. I can't think of a single reason why you can't have Iuz continue to prowl about the Flanaess, causing as much trou-

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ble as ever. Also, since Iuz is pretty weak as most demigods go, he probably can be slain by mortal attacks, unlike the more powerful demigods described in *Legends & Lore*.

You have several options when dealing with Iuz's assassin abilities: 1) You can continue to use the AD&D 1st Edition game's rules in Iuz's case; 2) you can give Iuz thief abilities instead; 3) you can treat Iuz as a thief using the assassin kit from the *Complete Thief's Handbook*; or, 4) you can just drop the abilities altogether.

How do the various deities from the Legends & Lore tome achieve such high damage scores, such as Ares's sword (3-30 hp) and spear (5-50 hp) without having titanic size and strength?

As explained in the "Avatars" section (pages 4-5), a deity and its avatars ignore mortal restrictions. The hefty damage inflicted by a deity's weapons is a direct manifestation of the deity's power. In the case of a war deity such as Ares, this power is quite potent.

The Player's Handbook, on pages 26 and 52, makes it clear that only single-classed fighters—not paladins and rangers—can use weapon specialization. However, the Complete Fighter's Handbook, on page 58, pretty clearly implies that all warriors (fighters, paladins, and rangers) can specialize. Did the rules change when the Complete Fighter's Handbook hit the shelves? If so, why would anyone want to play a simple fighter?

According to a short conversation I had with TSR, Inc.'s Dave "Zeb" Cook a while ago, the rules in the *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guide* are intended to serve as the fundamental basis for the AD&D® 2nd Edition game and are supposed to remain unchanged until that far-off day when a new version of the game comes along. (There are *no* plans for another edition currently in the works, but no set of game rules stays current forever.) While there is a continuous stream of new material planned for the game, all of it is intended to *supplement* the core rules, not replace them. All of the rules in the *Complete Fighter's Handbook* are optional, but the phrase giving weapon specialization to all warriors is an error.

With how many weapons can a fighter specialize? Is it possible to specialize in both a fighting style (from the Complete Fighter's Handbook) and a weapon or combination of weapons? How do you use weapon specialization if you also are using weapon groups from the Complete Fighter's Handbook? Is it possible to double specialize? If so, how do you get it and what bonuses do you get for it?

In the core rules, a single-classed fighter—and only a fighter—can specialize in exactly *one* particular weapon. If you're using weapon groups, the fighter must pick one weapon within the group as a specialty. If you're using the rules in the *Complete Fighters Handbook*, you can allow fighters to take more than one weapon specialization, but they still must choose their specializations one weapon at a time.

Style specialization is actually just a weapon proficiency available to warriors, rogues, and priests. Don't let the name confuse you; a style specialization is a general set of tricks for fighting a certain way, not an intensive study of one particular weapon. It is possible for a character to have more than one style specialization.

There are no rules for double specializations in the current version of the AD&D game. However, if you play a variant game and allow *all* warriors (including rangers and paladins) to take weapon specialization, you might allow fighters only to spend two extra proficiency slots on one weapon (and one weapon only) and become double specialized. The effect of a double specialization is up to the DM, but increasing the specialization bonus to +2 "to hit" and +3 damage seems most reasonable. If you use this unofficial optional rule, be prepared to start adjusting your campaign's play balance, because your poor monsters are going to have a hard time going toe-to-toe with your campaign's fighters.

I have a DRAGONLANCE® campaign mage of levels 3/8/19, of robes white/red/black. How many proficiencies does he have?

The character has only the proficiencies due to a 19th-level wizard. When a Krynn mage changes orders, he loses two levels and becomes either a student wizard (if his reduced level is three or less) or a member of the new order. The character *does not* retain spells, spheres, or levels from the old order. Furthermore, Krynn's deities remove all player characters of greater than 18th level from the world (see *DRAGONLANCE Adventures*, page 13). Your mage is now an anomaly and a renegade, and is doomed to "disappear" very soon unless he has managed to escape from Krynn, perhaps on a spell-jammer. Note also that your mage has no special magical powers—such as those gained from Krynn's moons—while away from Krynn.

What is the speed factor of a touch attack?

If you wish to assign a speed factor to a touch attack of any kind, I suggest you use the rule on page 94 of the *PHB*, where a "natural" attack speed factor depends on the attacker's size. For a man-sized creature, the speed factor is 3.

Can a beholder's gaze attacks be

reflected by a mirror?

Beholders don't have gaze attacks. They have various magical rays that are generated from their eyes, which is not the same thing as a gaze attack at all. A beholder's eye-beam attacks, and most other magical effects, cannot be reflected by a mirror.

Do liches retain racial abilities, such as drow infravision? How does magical aging, such as the casting of wish spells, affect liches?

All liches have very good infravision, or its equivalent (*see the Monstrous Compendium*, Volume I). DMs are free to have liches retain other racial abilities. Liches do age, though their "lifespan" last for centuries. When subject to magical aging, such as casting a *wish* spell, a lich must make a system-shock roll just as any other spell caster does. The DM is free to set the lich's constitution score at any appropriate value for this purpose (18 or even higher is not unreasonable). However, if the lich fails, its body is ripped apart by the force of the spell and the creature "dies."

On page 30 of the Player's Handbook, it says that mages cannot wear any armor, but page 182 of the Dungeon Master's Guide says magic-users can wear magical elven chain mail. Which is correct? Can mages wear other types of armor made

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from elven steel?

If you carefully reread page 182 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, you'll find it says that elven fighter/mages can wear elven chain mail without restriction; this is the only case in which magic-users can wear this armor. This rule also is included in the *Player's Handbook*, page 45. Single-classed mages cannot wear any armor at all. It probably will not cause play-balance problems if the DM allows other multiclassed (but not dual-classed) warrior/mages to wear other types of armor made from elven steel; details on these armors must be invented by the DM (using the *DMG*, pages 37-38).

On page 69, the *Player's Handbook* says the rate of fire for thrown daggers is two per round, but page 99 says the rate of fire is three per round.

You seem to have a first-printing *Player's Handbook*, which was in error. The word "daggers" at the top of the second column should read "darts," which it does in the second and subsequent printings.

Can a thief who has been observed by an enemy successfully backstab that enemy if the enemy ignores the thief and attacks the thief's party instead? The rules say only humanoid creatures can be backstabbed.

Does this exclude animals such as bears or wolves?

A successful backstab requires an element of surprise. If an opponent spots a thief maneuvering for a back attack, the opponent will not be caught unaware and cannot be backstabbed. Interpreting the rules strictly, **only** humanoid creatures—bipedal, one head, two arms, two legs, tail optional—can be backstabbed. Game balance probably won't suffer if the DM also allows common, four-legged animals to be backstabbed, but note that many animals have good senses and are pretty hard to sneak up on. Note also that the thief must be able to locate and strike a vital spot to get the damage multiplier from a backstab. A creature the thief has never studied or encountered before probably cannot be backstabbed, and neither can very large creatures, such as dragons and dinosaurs, or amorphous creatures, such as slimes and jellies.

According to the rules, an invisible and silenced elf sneaking up on an opponent whose dexterity is 15 or lower can gain surprise on an 11-in-10 chance. (The normal chance of surprise is 3-in-10 with a -4 modifier for being an elf without metallic armor, a -2 modifier for being invisible, and a -2 modifier for being silenced.) Is this really fair?

What is fair is up to the DM. However, if you have the common sense to realize this situation is unfair, it shouldn't be too hard to figure out what to do about it. The -4 modifier for being a lone elf not in metallic armor already assumes the character is moving silently (see *PHB*, page 22), so I suggest dropping the -2 modifier for silence in this case (you can't be doubly silent). Generally, surprise chances shouldn't be greater than 9-in-10 except in extraordinary circumstances, such as if a thief sneaks up on a sleeping drunk.

I just finished reading most of the DRAGONLANCE® saga paperbacks and I really like kender! Are there rules for playing this race in the AD&D game?

Indeed there are. Ask your game or book dealer for the *DRAGONLANCE Adventures* hardback (TSR product #2021). This tome is crammed full of information for playing campaigns set in the world of Krynn. It was written for use with the AD&D 1st Edition rules, so you'll have to apply a little common sense here and there to make everything work. There also is information on kender and all other major Krynn races in the *Monstrous Compendium*, *DRAGONLANCE Appendix* (TSR product #2104). You might also want to check out "All About the Kender," in *DRAGON* issue #101.

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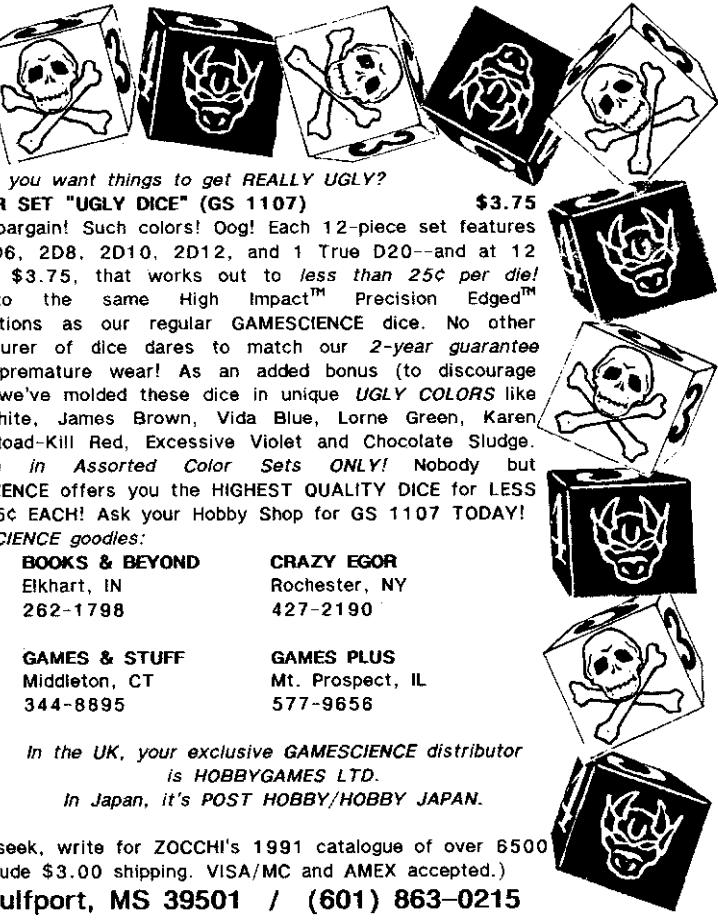
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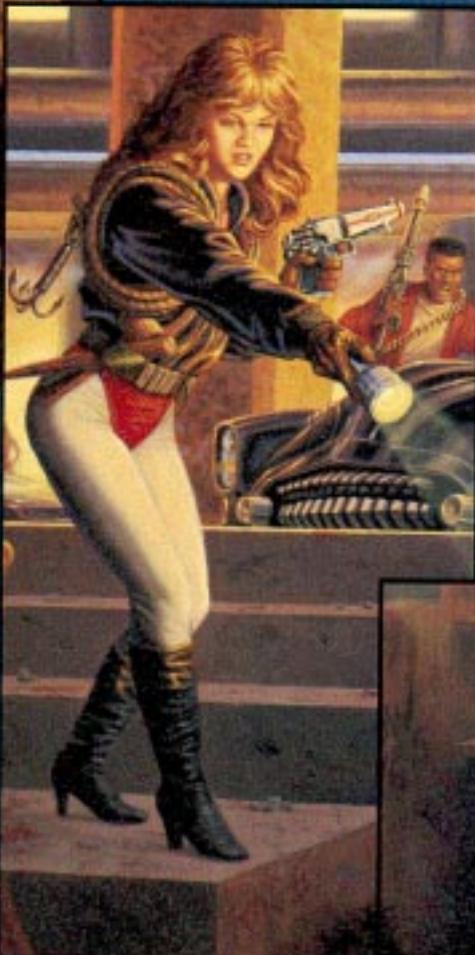
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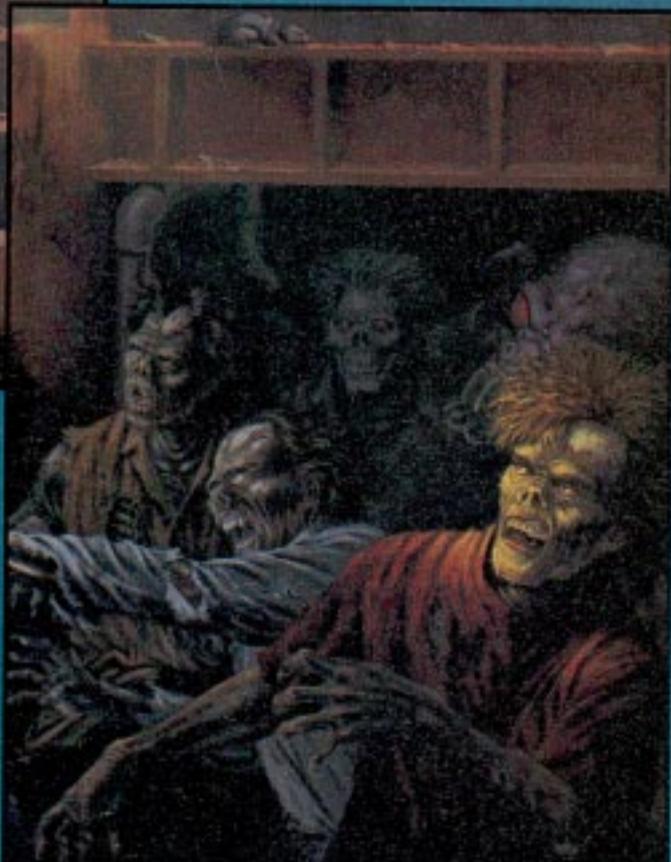
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The lightning bolt came out of a clear sky. Jedra, busy haggling over the price of a new waterskin, flinched as the bright blue flash illuminated the food and clothing and harness stands around him. In the same instant, a thunderclap rattled the entire bazaar and echoed off the adobe brick walls of the one- and two-story buildings surrounding it.

Jedra turned, ears ringing, to see a four-slave sedan chair on the ground only a few yards away, the overweight templar it had carried angrily brushing sand off his black robe of office while three heavily muscled slaves frantically righted the chair. The fourth slave lay on the ground, a patch of melted sand a few inches across bubbling beside his smoking body.

The slave must have stumbled and pitched the templar out, Jedra supposed, and the templar had killed him for it. Case closed.

Activity had stopped in the bazaar, but as others came to the same conclusion it picked up again. Jedra turned back to the water vendor, a leathery old elf with an eyepatch over his left eye, and said, "All right, two ceramics for the waterskin, but only if it's full."

The elf peered at Jedra, no doubt trying to judge how far he could push this young, skinny half-elf, but at last he nodded. "Done," he said, and he filled the teardrop-shaped leather sack from a barrel at the back of his stand, careful not to spill a single drop, while Jedra dug into his pouch for two fragments of ceramic coin. They were the last of Jedra's money. If he was to eat today, he would have to find work or scavenge something he could sell.

Taking the skin from the elf, he drained a fourth of its contents in two long swallows, then slung it around his shoulder by the strap, the weight of it comforting. At least he wouldn't go thirsty today.

The templar was already gone when he turned around again, as was the sedan chair and the slave's body. All that remained of the incident was the small glassy pool where the lightning bolt had melted the sand. Ever curious, Jedra kicked at it with the toe of his sandal, and a piece of glass flaked off the top. It was several inches across and an inch or so thick in the middle, but thinner around the edges.

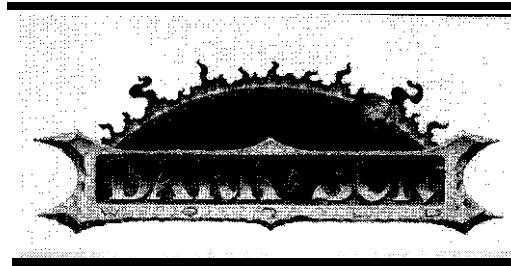
He bent down and picked up the fragment, then nearly dropped it again when he looked into it. There, amid the bubbles and streaks, danced a tiny upside-down image of a thri-kreen.

He looked beyond the glass. The actual creature stood across the way, its six-limbed, mantislike insectile body glistening in the sunlight as it examined a *gythka*—a pole-arm with blades at either end—at an armorer's stall.

The thri-kreen seemed oblivious to Jedra and his glass. Cautiously, lest he be less fortunate a second time, Jedra looked through the glass again, turning slowly and watch-

A Little Knowledge

by Jerry Oltion



Illustrations by Tom Baxa

ing as the upside-down bazaar slid by—backward. No one noticed that they had been turned on their heads, if indeed they had. Jedra put his free hand out beyond the glass to see if he could feel any sensation.

A point of bright light slid across his wrist, and when he paused to look at it, he felt a sudden sting of heat. The glass had burned him!

Jedra rubbed at his wrist, but he smiled. The glass must still hold a bit of the lightning bolt that had created it. That might be worth something to the right person. He glanced at a spice stand draped with herbs and roots, a stand that was rumored to be a black market outlet for the things used in the creation of magic. The proprietor would probably buy the glass from him.

He took a few steps toward the stand, then stopped, realizing he was reluctant to part with his new treasure so soon. A half-breed elf with no home and no magical training didn't often find himself in possession of wondrous devices. He had no doubt he would have to sell it eventually, but the day was still young and his hunger was still bearable. He would see what else the glass could do first.

He found a quiet spot just off the bazaar, in an alley lined with continuous mud-brick row houses. Their wooden doors and windows were closed tight to hold in the cool air from the previous night, giving Jedra privacy to experiment.

In just a few minutes he discovered the glass's major power, and the reason he'd been burned: When held at the right distance, it made things seem greater than they really were, including the heat of Athas's coppery red sun. Why most things remained only images while the sun actually seemed to appear beneath the glass was a mystery, as was the reason why objects beyond arm's reach of the glass were turned upside-down.

He had just ignited a dead leaf—no doubt blown into the alley from the king's garden, since few of the freemen living in the row houses would willingly spend the water to keep a plant alive—when he felt a presence in his mind, as if someone were watching him. He had learned to trust that sensation; he looked up to see a human nobleman of about sixty years, his hair as white as his robe, standing at the far end of the alley, mouth open in astonishment. Cursing his carelessness, Jedra stood and began to walk quickly toward the bazaar again. The man must have seen the leaf bursting into flame and would certainly draw the obvious conclusion that Jedra was using the glass to power some sort of magic.

Just as obviously, Jedra was not a templar, and by law only templars and the sorcerer-king himself were allowed to use magic. A commoner caught practicing it could be sold into slavery, even executed. Unused to magic or its implications, Jedra hadn't even considered that danger.

He considered it now. Suddenly sweating, he sprinted for the bazaar, hoping to lose himself in the crowd, but he had hardly made it a dozen paces before the noble found his voice. The shout of "Stop him!" pursued Jedra out of the alley, and he emerged to find everyone looking in his direction. None of the dozens of shoppers made a move to catch him, probably thinking him an ordinary thief, but when the noble emerged from the alley behind him and shouted, "A magician! Stop him!" they sprang into action.

A tall, massive half-giant with arms the size of Jedra's legs swung a sack of grain off one shoulder just as Jedra ran past, catching him square in the back with it. He staggered forward under the blow but kept his footing, only to slam into a compact, musclebound dwarf. The dwarfs blocky head reached only to Jedra's chest, just high enough to burst his new waterskin with the impact.

He dodged around the dwarf, but the entire bazaar seemed out to get him now. A noble's order was almost as good as law, especially an order the templars would so obviously support. None of the crowd wished to be caught disobeying that order lest they be accused of aiding in an escape. Such people often found themselves sharing their quarry's fate.

Jedra whirled and leaped back into the alley, dodging dwarf and half-giant and bowling over the noble, but he skidded to a stop when he realized that the noble's cry had brought people running from the other end, too. He was trapped. He looked to either side but saw only the closed doors and shuttered windows of the row houses lining the alley. Could he leap to a windowsill and from there to a roof? Not likely, but he could think of nothing else to try. He crouched to spring, but when he jumped it felt as if he'd kicked a hole in the ground rather than launched himself into action. He heard astonished gasps from the crowd and looked down to see a shimmering circle of darkness beneath his feet. He had just enough time to scream before he fell through.

He landed on his feet on hard-packed dirt, but the remains of his abortive leap and a sudden rush of disorientation combined to send him sprawling. He threw out his hands to stop his fall, and the glass flew from his grasp to skitter to a stop in a circle of ash next to a pair of dark leather boots.

Straining to see in the dim light, Jedra raised his head to find who the boots belonged to. A short, wiry man with dark curly hair stood before him. The man bent down to pick up the glass.

"Who are you?" asked Jedra as he stood and took stock of his surroundings, though the circle of ash around the man's feet told him plenty. He was a magician, and not a templar, either. Templars drew their power from the city's sorcerer-king, but other magicians had to draw upon the life-force around them. Every time a magician cast a spell, he drew his energy from the plant life and fertile soil around him. If a mage wasn't careful, he drew all the life-force from an area, reducing it to ash.

The man didn't answer. He examined the glass carefully, nearly dropping it when he saw upside-down images of the room slide through it. "Oho!" he said. "So this is what caused all the commotion. Is it your work?"

Jedra had no idea how to respond. He looked around him and saw that he was in a one-room house, with a cot in one corner, a plank table and two chairs in another, a wooden chest and cabinet in a third, and a workbench covered with scrolls and wands and unfamiliar tools in the fourth. A window in one wall opened onto a shared courtyard and allowed a shaft of sunlight to illuminate the room. The window in the opposite wall was shuttered, but Jedra could hear the mob shouting in confusion just be-

yond it. Obviously, the man had rescued him with some kind of spell, but for what reason Jedra couldn't guess. Finally he simply said, "Maybe."

"Good answer," the man said. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Dornal, mage and member of the Veiled Alliance."

Jedra considered making up a name, but there seemed little point in lying to a mage. "Jedra," he said.

Dornal smiled. "I was right to rescue you, Jedra. You have powers the Alliance would love to learn. You have heard of us, haven't you?"

Jedra nodded. Of course he had. The Veiled Alliance was supposedly a league of mages opposed to the sorcerer-king and his templars and to unscrupulous magicians in general. They worked to put life-force back into the world rather than use it up to power their spells. They were a secretive bunch whose existence Jedra had only half believed until now.

"I was looking through the shutter when I saw you practicing your burning spell," said Dornal as he squinted to see the images in the glass. "I assume this is used for that as well?" He swung around toward the open window.

"Don't look at the sun!"

The mage lowered the glass and studied at Jedra with narrowed brows.

"It magnifies things. Even sunlight. You could burn your eye with it."

"Oh." Dornal examined the glass with renewed interest. "And what were you doing with it?"

"Experimenting."

"Of course."

A subtle change in the noise from outside made Dornal step to the window and peer through the cracks in the shutter, then he turned suddenly away. "They've brought in templars to search the area for magic. We've got to go." He walked to the cabinet, pulled out a cloth traveling bag, and began to throw clothing and valuables into it. The lightning glass went into the bag, Jedra noticed.

"Go where?" he asked.

"We must leave the city for a time," said Dornal. "I risked a great deal in stealing you away right out in the open like that. Templars can trace the use of magic, and they don't like to be publicly thwarted; they'll search for us for many days before they give up."

"Days!"

"That's right. So we would be wise to stay out of their path until that time passes." Dornal pulled a long, multi-colored tunic from the cabinet and tossed it to Jedra.

"Here, put that on."

Jedra complied, seeing the wisdom in that, at least. He was about to argue about the idea of leaving the city when Dornal tossed him a leather sack and said, "Keep that out of sight."

Jedra nearly collapsed when he opened it and saw a double-handful of silver and gold coins. He'd never before held even a single silver piece. A fortune this size would take him a dozen lifetimes to earn, and at least a lifetime to spend. If Dornal trusted someone he'd just met with such wealth, then the man must be a powerful mage indeed. And if so, then he certainly knew more about keeping himself safe from templars than Jedra did. Jedra

stripped off his ruined waterskin and used its tie to secure the money bag around his neck, making certain it hung hidden beneath his tunic.

Dornal tossed another money sack into his traveling bag, tied it closed, and stepped to the back door. "Coming?" he asked.

Jedra couldn't see that he had much choice, not if the templars were looking for him. "I guess," he said, and followed the mage out the door.

Within hours he found himself sharing a cramped cabin in an upper deck of a merchant caravan headed for the city of Tyr. It was hardly a caravan, really, just a single enormous wooden wagon pulled by two equally enormous mekillots—long, wide, lizardlike creatures with hide thick enough to turn arrows. The wagon they drew looked like a castle on rollers, complete with battlements from which guards could fire on the raiders and wild beasts that roamed the desert. Inside was a warren of decks and compartments with enough cargo capacity to hold an entire bazaar's worth of goods.

This wagon's cargo also included slaves, destined to labor and probably die on the ziggurat being built for the sorcerer-king of Tyr. Jedra shuddered when he thought of the poor creatures huddled in darkness just a few decks below his own. Had it not been for Dornal's intervention, he might have found himself in a similar situation.

The dry, musky smell of mekillot hide poured in through the single foot-square porthole in their cabin, but closing the shutter would have been worse. They'd only just left the city, but Jedra was already sweating with the heat and he knew it would get much worse as the day wore on. They needed all the fresh air they could get, even if it did smell of dust and lizard.

They also needed the sunlight the window admitted. Dornal was examining Jedra's mysterious piece of glass, holding it up to the light and branding lines into the tiny tabletop jutting out from the opposite wall.

"It doesn't seem to need life-force to power it," he said. "Truly astonishing. What else does it do?"

"You saw how it magnifies things," Jedra said. He was sitting on the edge of the cabin's single bunk, trying to keep from getting sick with the swaying of the wagon.

"Yes, yes, and it makes distant things look smaller and upside-down," said Dornal. "I fail to see the usefulness of that, unless you could actually make something become smaller and upside-down. Is there a spell for that, perhaps?"

"I don't know," Jedra said. "I don't think so."

"You don't think so." Dornal peered at Jedra through the glass. "You know, it's becoming quite clear to me that you know very little about this . . . this device. You didn't make it yourself, did you?"

Jedra had been dreading this moment. He considered lying, but he knew he'd be caught in an instant. Reluctantly he said, "No. But I saw how it was made."

"Did you now? Tell me about it. What spells were used?"

Dornal was obviously testing him. Carefully Jedra described how the templar called down the lightning bolt and how he had found the glass afterward.

"A lightning spell," Dornal mused when he was done.

"Yes, I suppose there might be enough energy in a lightning spell to make something like this, but if the templar didn't fashion it on purpose, then I don't suppose he knows anything more about it than you do."

"Probably not."

"And you know next to nothing. You're not a mage at all, are you?"

"No," Jedra admitted. Hopefully, he added, "But I bet I could learn."

Dornal laughed softly, and his laugh sent a chill down Jedra's spine. "Oh, no doubt you could. You've got potential. I can sense it in you. But I see no point in training my own competition." He waved an arm, and Jedra felt his muscles lock into place. The wagon lurched, one of its wheels no doubt falling into a circle of ash that suddenly appeared beneath it as the magician above cast his spell. Unable to keep his balance, Jedra toppled to his side on the bunk.

With effort, he could still speak. "What are you doing?" he demanded.

"Retrieving what's mine." Dornal knelt beside Jedra and removed the money bag from beneath the boy's tunic. "Thank you for carrying this past the gate guards for me," he said, pouring into his hand a collection of crystals and amulets that would have marked anyone as a magician on sight. "I wasn't sure we'd make it past them unchallenged."

Dornal had cast some kind of illusion on the bag, Jedra realized. He kicked at the magician with all his strength, but his spell-bound leg hardly moved. "You used me," he hissed.

"I did. Get used to it. It's going to happen a lot where you're going."

"Where's that?"

For answer, Dornal pointed downward. Then he waved his hand again, and Jedra lost consciousness entirely.

Jedra woke to intense heat and the smell of dozens of sweaty, unwashed bodies. The only light came from two barred windows set in doors on either end of the hold, the doors themselves opening only into dim companionways, but the boy didn't need light to know where he was. Dornal had sold him into slavery, probably for little more than the cost of his passage. He'd taken back his tunic, too; Jedra now wore a simple breechcloth.

He sat up and looked around him. There were twenty or thirty others in the hold with him, all bound at wrists and ankles with heavy leather manacles and tied to the wall with ropes attached to the collars around their necks. Jedra saw that the slave-master hadn't been picky; there were humans, dwarves, an elf, even one of the insectile thri-kreen.

"What did you do, cross the wagon master?" a female voice asked. He turned and saw a short, round-faced human woman sitting beside him. She wore a halter in addition to her breechcloth.

"I trusted a magician," he said after a moment.

She laughed, but not unkindly. "Not a wise idea," she said.

A dwarf two people beyond her did laugh unkindly, but not at Jedra. In a voice like distant thunder he said, "You

should talk, templar."

The other slaves laughed. Jedra stared at the woman in open amazement. She, a templar? "Wrong," she said to the dwarf. "I was a healer. My powers are psionic, not magical, and to be a templar you've got to know magic."

Jedra knew next to nothing about psionics, the mental abilities that some people could call upon instead of magic, save that such powers supposedly didn't require life-energy to fuel them. He had wondered if his own ability to know when people were watching him was psionic, but he'd never before found anyone who could tell him.

He was about to ask the woman beside him, but the dwarf wasn't through taunting her. "You worked for the templars," he said. "That's practically the same thing."

"Slaves work for the templars, too," she spat back at him.

"But you got paid for it. Blood money," said the dwarf.

Jedra normally wouldn't have gotten mixed up in someone else's argument, but he wanted to talk with this woman. Besides, he couldn't help noticing that, given a bath and a chance to brush out her shoulder-length brown hair, she would be rather pretty. It was enough to make him say, "Does it matter? We're all slaves now."

The dwarf growled, "Yah, thanks to the likes of her. And maybe you, too, eh? You like templars, do you?"

Stunned by the sudden accusation, Jedra stammered, "I—of course not. I mean—"

Stay out of it, the woman's voice said clearly in his mind. *I can take care of myself.* Aloud she said, "Leave him alone. And leave me alone, too, or I'll heal your mouth closed for you."

"Hah," the dwarf snorted, but Jedra noticed that he shut up.

The woman turned her attention back to Jedra. "So just how did trusting a magician get you here?"

Jedra told her the whole story about the piece of lightning glass, ending with Dornal's betrayal.

"He told you he was one of Those Who Wear the Veil?" she asked.

"That's right."

"Well, that was his first lie. The Veiled Alliance really are honest magicians, for the most part. But they're secretive as thieves when it comes to talking about it, and they hate people like this Dornal."

"I wish I'd known that before," Jedra said.

She laughed again. "We all wish we'd known something we didn't, or we wouldn't be here, that's for sure. What's your name, anyway?"

"Jedra. What's yours?"

"Kayan."

Jedra looked up and down the slave hold, but the other slaves had already lost interest in the two of them. He leaned close to her anyway. Softly, he asked, "How did you do that, when you spoke to me in my mind?"

You mean sending thoughts? It's a simple psionic power.

It wasn't quite like hearing her voice, but Jedra understood her words perfectly. His intention to ask about his own ability vanished in a sudden, more immediate question. "How far can you reach with that?" he asked excitedly.

"Depends on how well I can visualize the person I'm trying to contact," she said aloud. "If it's someone I

know, I can talk to them almost anywhere. Otherwise, they've got to be close."

"Then you can call for help!"

She shook her head. "Who would I ask? Most of the people I know were the ones who put me here in the first place. They'd think it was real funny hearing from me now."

"But there must be somebody—"

"Look, nobody I know is going to come after a caravan just to rescue a couple of slaves. So unless you know someone—"

"The Jura-Dai would." The voice was high and pure, and came from directly across the hold from Jedra. He looked up to see an elf staring at him. His eyes were set close in a narrow face, and his nose was slender and long. Everything about him was long. Even bent at the knees, his legs stretched nearly across to Jedra, and his reddish blond hair reached the floor despite being braided. He was like an exaggerated version of Jedra himself, whose elven features had been rounded and shortened by his human heritage.

"What?" Kayan asked.

"I am Galar of the Jura-Dai tribe. My people would come for me if they knew I was here."

"They'd attack a caravan just for you?"

Galar laughed. "There is plenty of treasure on board, too."

Jedra said to Kayan, "You can send a message to his tribe!"

Kayan shook her head. "I don't know anyone in his tribe. So unless they're traveling along right beside us, I can't reach them."

"You could try."

"And get myself blasted unconscious by the guards?"

"Huh? How would they know you'd done anything?"

She looked at him like he had drool on his chin. "One of the guards is a psionicist. That's one of the ways they keep slaves in line. He'll be watching for escape attempts."

"Oh."

Kayan's expression softened. "Look, I'd try it in a minute if I thought it'd work, but I know my limits. I can't contact any random elf out there. That's just not the way it works."

Jedra nodded, feeling hope drain out of him, but a sudden thought checked his plunge into despair. "Wait a minute. These psionic powers of yours—are they something you can teach?"

"Well, you've got to have some inherent ability, but otherwise, yes, it's possible. Why?"

Jedra nodded toward Galar. "You could teach him. He knows plenty of elves."

Kayan looked at Jedra as if he'd just suggested escaping by a trap door—and then shown her one at her own feet. But she'd been a slave long enough to know how debilitating false hope could be. "Well," she said cautiously, "it might be worth a try."

Galar, they soon discovered, had all the telepathic ability of a rock. He couldn't even make himself heard psionically across the slave hold, much less across the expanse of desert between him and his tribe. Jedra, however, sur-

prised them all. With only a few hours of Kayan's coaching, he learned to send his thoughts to anyone in the hold, even the thri-kreen. His control was terrible—everyone near his intended target heard garbled voices in their heads, as well—but the raw power behind his sending was more than Kayan had ever seen before.

"You'd better stop," she suggested after a particularly strong blast had reached half the slaves in the hold.

"There's no way the guards could've missed that. They might not care about a little telepathy among the slaves, but they're going to do something about it if you keep it up."

Jedra sighed. He'd been given a glimpse of something incredible within himself, then told to close his eyes. "I think I should try to contact the Jura-Dai," he said. "You admitted my power's stronger than yours; I might be able to reach them."

"No!" Kayan pounded the deck between them with her fist. "You don't know what you're talking about. Your unfocused thoughts wouldn't make it beyond the first dune. You've got to learn control first." She leaned back against the wall. "Wait. Bide your time. Sooner or later an opportunity will come along, and then maybe you can use your talent."

"Maybe," Jedra grumbled, but he supposed Kayan was right. He would wait—for a little while.

He soon learned that the easiest way to wait—and to escape the heat—was to spend as much time as possible unconscious. He leaned back against the wall and let the creaking of the wagon lull him to sleep.

Jedra floated face-down in a pool of water. The bottom was far out of reach, but the water was so clear only a faint shimmering told him he was seeing through anything but air. He drifted peacefully along, watching his shadow slip over the sand below, but when another shadow blotted out his own and he turned to see what cast it, he found himself suddenly sinking downward.

He thrashed his arms and legs, but the water wouldn't support him. He hadn't been breathing while adrift; now he needed to breathe desperately but couldn't.

The foreign shadow extended itself toward him, and suddenly Jedra felt a hand clasping his arm, pulling him upward. His head broke the surface, and he gasped in a breath, blinking in astonishment at his rescuer. It was Galar, still bound at the wrists, but behind him Jedra could see an entire tribe of elves. He saw their gaily colored tents, their herds of long, beetlelike pack animals called kanks, their willowy children playing in the sand—

Jedra sat up with a start, momentarily disoriented to find himself back in the slave hold of the merchant caravan. He'd seen a tribe of elves! He could still see them clearly in his mind.

Could his sleeping brain have used some sort of psionic vision to locate the Jura-Dai? It was possible; Kayan had told him he had other untrained skills besides telepathy. Jedra turned to ask her, but she was still asleep, and now that he was using his eyes again, the image in his mind started to fade. He closed his eyes and tried to concentrate. Yes, there they were, a whole tribe of elves camped out near a desert oasis. He could still see them, but he

knew he couldn't hold onto them for long.

It was now or never, he realized. Concentrating hard on the elves in his vision, he tried to focus his thoughts in the way Kayan had taught him. He felt a hint of recognition, a faint twinge of "contact." It was enough. He summoned all the energy he could muster into the single thought:

Galar of the Jura-Dai is held captive in a caravan a day out from Urik on the road to Tyr.

Retribution came suddenly and with such intensity that Jedra cried out as if he were being burned alive, for that was exactly what it felt like. He writhed in agony, feeling his skin peel away in sheets of flame. The pain was worse than anything he'd imagined possible, and it went on and on, far longer than it would have if he'd really been on fire. A real fire would have killed him by now.

Then, as suddenly as it had come, the pain went away. Jedra collapsed on the deck, gasping for air.

Kayan lifted him to cradle his head on her lap. "You had to try it," she said.

"Dream," Jedra whispered through the memory of pain. "I saw the elves in a dream, saw my chance."

"Your chance to get us all punished," the dwarf growled, eyeing the door warily, but no guards appeared.

Galar looked to Jedra and asked, "Did you reach them?"

"I don't know." Jedra's whole body shuddered involuntarily with the release of tension. "I couldn't tell."

Galar asked Kayan, "Could he really have found them in a dream?"

She shrugged. "Who knows? It's possible, I suppose. What did you see?"

Jedra described the camp, with its colored tents and pens full of kanks.

"Colored tents?" asked Galar.

"Red and green and yellow, with blue and yellow banners flying from their peaks," Jedra said.

Galar shook his head sorrowfully. "I don't know whom you saw, if indeed you saw anyone at all, but the tents of the Jura-Dai are the color of the sand. Their only marking is the tribe totem on the walls." Galar held out his arm to show them a tattoo on his wrist: an angular, stylized raincloud with daggers for raindrops.

"Oh." Jedra pulled himself up to a sitting position. "I was stupid. I'm sorry."

"Don't be," Kayan said. "You didn't know. I'd have probably done the same thing in your position."

"I didn't know," Jedra said sullenly. "That's starting to sound like my motto."

"Don't be so hard on yourself," she said. "You're learning."

"Oh yes. I'll be a master by the time I die on the ziggurat." With that, Jedra turned away and refused to respond to any further words of comfort.

The wagon rolled on. Exhausted, Jedra slept, this time without any dreams of elves, and when he awoke it was already morning. The guards brought wooden mugs of water and bowls of thin gruel, but Jedra had barely eaten half of his before they unshackled him and led him into the upper decks of the wagon. He expected to be taken to the psionicist and reprimanded again for his offense, so he

was surprised when the guard brought him to the cabin he had shared for so short a time with Dornal. The guard knocked, and the mage himself opened the door.

"Well, hello," Dornal said, stepping aside. "Do come in." The guard gave Jedra a shove, and he staggered into the room.

"Thank you," Dornal said, tossing the guard a silver coin. Jedra gasped. That was probably more money than the man made in a month; Dornal was obviously buying his silence. Sure enough, the guard left and closed the door behind him.

"You were holding out on me," Dornal said, almost conversationally. "You shouldn't have done that, because now I will have to use less subtle methods to extract the information I need." He waved his hands, and Jedra once more felt his muscles lock into place.

The wagon lurched. He felt himself topple forward and instinctively tried to throw out his hands to keep his balance. Spell-crippled, his arms didn't move, but he nonetheless kept his balance, and Dornal, directly in front of him, staggered backward as if Jedra had actually pushed him.

"What's this?" Dornal asked, astonished. He righted himself and waved his arms again, just as Jedra frantically tried to imagine a fist slamming into the magician. Dornal rocked back on his heels with the blow, but the renewed binding spell clamped down on Jedra with the force of a giant's fist; he fell face-first to the deck, striking with a resounding thump. Blood gushed from his nose, and it felt as if he'd bitten his tongue.

"Your pitiful little tricks won't help you, boy," Dornal growled, kicking Jedra repeatedly until the half-elf nearly fainted from the pain of broken ribs and a fractured skull. Jedra tried to scream, but the binding spell wouldn't allow it. He tried to strike out psionically, but the pain prevented him from concentrating.

Satisfied at last that Jedra was subdued, Dornal dragged him by the heels into the patch of sunlight shining through the porthole. Jedra felt the heat on his bare back, then a sudden burning. Dornal was using the lightning glass on him.

"Now," Dornal said, "you will tell me everything you know."

He relaxed the binding spell enough to allow Jedra to speak, and the boy let out his breath in a long, gurgling scream. At last he found his voice. "Stop!" he shouted, turning his head far enough to see the magician kneeling over him. "I'll tell you anything you want!"

"You will tell me the truth," Dornal said, drawing the point of heat slowly across Jedra's back. "Starting with what other powers you have and how you invoke them."

Cursing and weeping with the pain, Jedra told Dornal what little he knew, but the magician obviously didn't believe him. He held the glass over Jedra's back, demanding more, until Jedra wished he had some hidden knowledge to give Dornal so that the torture would end.

At last Jedra screamed, "I don't know any more! Kill me or let me go, but stop hurting me!"

Dornal leaned back out of the sunlight and scraped sweat off his brow with the edge of his hand. "You're in no position to make demands," he said. "On the other

hand, I'm beginning to think you're telling the truth." He gave Jedra one last burn just for spite, then went to the door and shouted for the guard to put the boy back in the hold.

This time his wounds were real. Jedra was dimly aware of being locked up again, of warm hands touching him, of Kayan and Galar discussing his injuries, but he was beyond caring. He wanted only to die.

Even death was denied him. Jedra felt strength pouring back into him with the same relentlessness with which it had been ripped away, healing and revitalizing his wounds. It took time; he was aware of the wagon moving again and of the day wearing on into night. He was aware of Kayan holding onto him throughout. She was doing this, he knew. She was lending him her strength.

He woke with the dawn, aching and hungry but healed. Kayan looked gaunt with fatigue. When the guards came with food and water he made her eat and drink most of his, despite her protests that he needed it as much as she did.

"You gave me too much of your own strength," he said.. Then, more softly, "I didn't know such a thing was possible."

"Of course it is," she said. "That's how healing works. All of my powers are like that. Sharing thoughts, sharing ability, sharing health—it's all the same sort of thing."

"Sharing ability?"

She shrugged. "Well, if you've got something you can do but I can't, and if I've got something I can do but you can't, then we can put our heads together and do them both at the same time."

Jedra could feel sudden excitement building in him. "What if you try to share the same ability? Does it get stronger?"

"Depends on what you're trying to do. Why?"

"What would happen if we both tried calling the Jura-Dai?"

Kayan snorted. "Will you forget that idea? Wasn't it enough that you almost got yourself killed?"

"Not if we can make it work this time. Look, you've got the control we need to actually reach someone. I've got the power to get us there even if we don't know just who we're looking for. I was close last time, I know I was. A little more control and I'd have made contact."

"You think."

"I know,"

"If you're wrong, then we both suffer the guards' reaction. I can't heal you again if I'm hurt too."

The dwarf said, "Whether he's right or wrong, you'd better be able to take care of the guards before you try anything. Another escape attempt and they'll probably punish us all. And if they do, I promise you, you'll regret it."

"We've got to try something," Jedra said. "We've got to escape this caravan before we get to Tyr."

"I have no objection to escaping," the dwarf said. "You just make sure we do escape when you try it, though."

"He's right," said Kayan. "It's a long trip. We can afford to wait for a better opportunity."

"I don't want to wait."

"Well you're going to have to," she said, "because I'm not going to help you get yourself hurt again."

Jedra looked to Galar for help, but the elf only held out his slender hands in a gesture that said as plain as words, "What can we do?"

About midday the caravan came to an outpost. The slaves could hear shouts of joy from the wagon guards, but those shouts soon turned to dismay when the guards saw that the outpost had been raided recently. The wagon stopped only long enough for the guards to sift through the ruins, then started up again. That night when the guards brought water, the mugs were only half full. When the slaves complained, one of the guards growled, "Be glad you get any. The raiders poisoned the well. We're all on half rations until we get to the next outpost."

The slaves had been getting the bare minimum already; half that was hardly enough to keep them alive. They made it through another day and a half before a sand-storm blew up out of the deep desert and forced them to a stop, and there they stayed for two more days, listening to the howl of sand-laden wind battering against the wagon's closed hatches. The second day they got no water at all.

Their mouths and tongues were too swollen to allow speech. *They've given up on their cargo*, Kayan said in Jedra's mind when the evening water time came and went without a show of guards. *Now they're hoarding what's left for themselves.*

I think it's time we tried calling for help, Jedra answered.

No.

Why not? We've got nothing to lose, do we? We're going to die in this hold in a day or two anyway, unless we do something.

Kayan said nothing. Jedra could hear her labored breathing in the dark beside him.

Let's at least say we died trying.

After a long time, she answered, *Let's see if we can try and live to tell about it instead.*

The convergence felt a little like the sharing of thoughts, but this time their combined consciousness grew until they felt like a single incredibly powerful being. The slave hold took on a shimmery, not quite substantial quality, as if the linked Jedra and Kayan existed on a higher plane that was only loosely tied to reality. It looked much like Jedra's underwater dream when he had seen the elves.

Unlike in his dream, they could move freely here, directing their attention wherever they chose. Cautiously, lest they alert the psionic guard to their presence, they drifted through the wagon's walls and out into the desert, searching for a tribe of elves.

The sandstorm was a whisper of motion, nothing more. In the dream, Jedra and Kayan became a swift, sleek-winged bird darting over the desert. The minds of other travelers were great funnels down which they could slide, only to find themselves looking out of strange eyes at the interiors of wagons or tents. None belonged to the elves they sought. They searched outward in ever-widening spirals, leaving the storm behind and speeding over the dunes faster than any real bird could fly, rising higher and higher to see more desert at once—until finally they found an enormous well leading down toward dozens of tents



pitched at the base of a mountainous dune.

The tents would have been hard to spot if the dreamscape hadn't exaggerated them out of proportion, for they were the same grayish yellow color as the sand. Their walls were decorated with the stylized cloud raining daggers that Galar had shown them.

Found them! they thought together. They dropped toward the largest tent, felt themselves being drawn into the mind of the elf inside, and looked out through his eyes to see a bard playing a harp to a dozen or more elves reclining on woven rugs. The elves' clothing made up for the lack of color on their tents; men and women alike wore loose, rainbow-colored blouses and pants. Desert life had darkened their leathery skin to a deep brown.

Jedra's and Kayan's host became aware of their presence, and quickly they sent, *Galar of the Jura-Dai is a slave in a caravan caught in a sandstorm five days out from Urik to Tyr.*

They had no time to listen for a response. The tent and its occupants swirled as if they were smoke blown by the wind, and suddenly Jedra and Kayan were adrift over the desert again. *The guard*, they realized. *He heard our sending.*

A whirlwind danced across the dunes toward them: the guard's attack on their minds rendered visible in the dreamscape. Kayan and Jedra became a bird again, darting in and out around the whirlwind, seeking some sign of weakness where they could press an attack of their own.

Inside, the part that was still Kayan said, directly into his mind.

They flew over the top and down through the center of the funnel. The whirlwind writhed like a snake, trying to throw them out, but they were faster. When they reached the point of the funnel they grew larger and spread their wings outward with the force Jedra had discovered when

Dornal had attacked him. The whirlwind spun into fragments, leaving a dark shadow of itself in its place. Jedra and Kayan slid into the shadow and found themselves in a silent, unguarded cave. They had knocked the guard unconscious.

Kill him, Jedra said.

No, heal him so no one else knows anything happened, Kayan answered, including himself.

They wound their way through the dark caverns of the guard's mind, sealing off whole sections of it as they passed. They let him keep just enough psionic ability to monitor the slaves but not enough to harm them, and they blocked his memory of the battle completely. They left him snoring peacefully in his cabin, then dissolved their link.

Coming out of convergence felt like losing half their intelligence. Jedra wanted to join again immediately, but the new fatigue in his dehydrated body warned him that he had already paid a high enough price for their temporary enhancement. Doing it again would have to wait for better days.

The sandstorm blew over in the night, and the wagon moved out again the next day, reaching another outpost by evening. This one was still standing, and for the first time in three days the slaves received water. Their strength slowly returned, and Jedra and Kayan began to hope they might survive long enough to learn whether or not their efforts had come to anything.

The other slaves weren't even aware at first of what Jedra and Kayan had done, but since they had already gotten away with it, the two finally decided to tell their fellow prisoners. At first the others were cautiously opti-

mistic, but when another day passed without action, their mood began to grow ugly. "The elves aren't going to come," said one.

"We don't even know if they exist," said another.

"Should've known better than to trust a half-elf boy," a third muttered.

"A half-elf and a templar," the dwarf put in, "feeding us false hope so we'd think they were with us."

Galar spoke up. "If my people heard the call, they will come."

"They heard it," Jedra said. "Give them time; they were a long way away." But inwardly he wondered. Would they come?

He got his answer that evening, when a sudden commotion broke out on the upper decks. Shouts and the pounding of running feet echoed down the companionways, and the wagon lurched to a halt as a loud crack of thunder split the air.

"Link up," Kayan hissed, and almost immediately she and Jedra were back in convergence. The wagon became insubstantial, and their consciousness slipped away and upward to watch the battle.

The desert was covered with elves and their beetlelike kanks. Armed raiders swarmed like ants up the sides of the wagon, hacking at the guards with swords and overpowering them by sheer numbers. A silver eagle with iridescent wings flew through the dreamscape, breathing fire upon the defenders; the elves had a psionicist as well, it seemed. A tiny whirlwind rose toward it—the greatly diminished wagon guard returning the attack—but even as they joined battle a third warrior entered the dream.

It came as a giant black bat, but the bat was different in texture from the eagle and the whirlwind. It had a soft-edged fuzziness about it, as if it were somehow less substantial than the others, and its face was recognizably human.

Dornal, Jedra realized. Does he have psionic power, too?

He's fighting with magic, Kayan said. That's why he doesn't look the same as the others.

His insubstantiality in the psionic vision evidently didn't affect his ability to enter the fray. The bat swept over the eagle and the whirlwind, spitting lightning bolts ahead of it like spears. It attacked indiscriminately, blasting both with multiple strikes until the eagle fell smoking from the sky and the whirlwind blew away into nothing.

Then it turned its attention to Jedra and Kayan.

They had been hovering overhead as a bird again, but as the bat rose toward them their combined intellect fashioned a barrier, a sheet of glass that trapped the lightning's fury and held the bat at bay.

Lightning glass, Jedra thought. Exulting in his newfound abilities, he bent the glass to match the shape of the piece he had discovered in the bazaar, and suddenly the bat beneath it glowed white hot, flared, and disappeared in a cloud of greasy smoke.

The dreamscape shook as if gripped by an earthquake, and Jedra and Kayan tumbled out of convergence to find the slave hold full of elven raiders, two of whom were slicing through their bonds.

The leader of the elves, a heavily muscled warrior who bled from half a dozen sword slashes, advanced into the

hold. He grinned when he saw Galar and said, "You look like walking death."

"So do you," Galar replied, and the two embraced like long-lost brothers.

"You may all go free," the elf warrior said to the slaves, "but take nothing with you. Everything in this wagon now belongs to the Jura-Dai."

Galar nodded to Jedra and Kayan. "These are the ones who called you here," he said.

The warrior bowed to the half-elf and the human. "In that case, you may take whatever you wish, and you may travel with the Jura-Dai until you reach the safety of your own kind."

"Thank you," Jedra said. "There's one thing in particular I'd like to retrieve." He took Kayan's hand and led her out of the slave hold, up narrow companionways choked with elves already hauling the wagon's cargo away, and onto the passenger deck.

Smoke seeped from beneath Dornal's cabin door. They opened it cautiously, holding their breath against the stench of burned meat, and looked inside to see the magician's body lying on the floor, his charred flesh curling from exposed bones.

Horrified at the spectacle but unable to look away, Jedra stepped into the room. The floor was barely scorched around the body; it was as if the magician had burned from the inside out.

How could we have done such a thing? he whispered in his mind.

Wild talent can be unpredictable, Kayan answered.

Jedra stared at the body until he was forced to breathe, then finally said, *I think we need to tame it, then.*

The lightning glass rested on the floor near one crisped hand. Jedra picked it up and turned away, but Dornal's traveling bag sitting open on the bunk made him pause. He upended it, and along with the clothing out fell two small leather sacks. One held magical amulets, and the other was full of money.

Jedra took them both and left the room. *These will probably be useful where we're going*, he said as he closed the door behind him.

"Where is that?" Kayan asked aloud.

"Someplace where we can find a real member of the Veiled Alliance," he said. He led the way out of the wagon's interior and down the gangplank to the sand where the elves were piling their booty.

Kayan blinked in the sudden brightness. "Why the Alliance?" she asked.

"Because there's still too much we don't know," Jedra replied. He saw her puzzlement and went on. "Ignorance got me into this mess. If it hadn't been for you, I'd have never gotten out of it. But even now I know just enough to be dangerous. If I—if we are going to survive in this world, then we need to master the forces that shape it, and for that we need a mentor."

"We?" she asked.

Jedra grinned. "Well, after all we've gone through, I just—Am I assuming something I shouldn't?"

She shook her head and smiled. "No. 'We' sounds just fine to me."

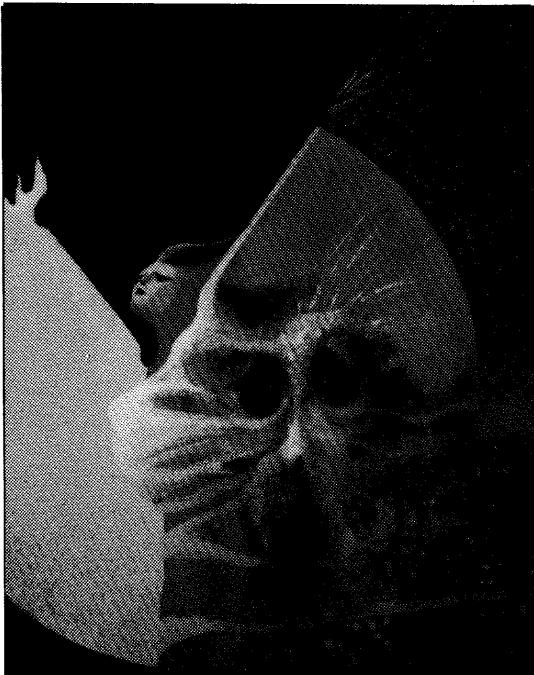
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Beauty From Beyond

In 1853, renowned author Captain Frederick Marryat was determined to prove that Raynham Hall, the stately Norfolk home of the Townshend family, was not haunted. His rational mind rejected any idea that beings may live beyond the realms of death, but when fate brought him face to face with the ghostly visage of the Brown Lady, he had no choice but to accept the hauntings as fact.

On the final night of his investigation, Marryat sat writing in his journal when a chilling draft extinguished the candle by which he wrote. Rising to relight the flame, he glimpsed the beautiful apparition of the Brown Lady, who was elegantly attired in the rich brown satin and lace covered gown she had worn over 100 years ago when she posed for the portrait which still hangs in Raynham Hall.

The Captain recognized her at once, but when she stared into his eyes and smiled wickedly, it so terrified him that he stepped into the hallway mere feet from her, pulled out his pistol and fired several shots. The Brown Lady continued to smile even as the bullets passed through her incorporeal form and into the door behind her. Then she emitted an eerie laugh and disappeared, leaving only a wisp of smoke and a former non-believer as proof that she had been there.



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A little gnoll-ledge can be a dangerous thing

The Sociology of the Flind

by Spike Y. Jones

"Aidan, come away from the window."
"But I heard a wolf," whined the boy. "I want to see it. It sounded strange."

"Curiosity is fine in its own time, but now you must come away from the windows." Another eerie, laughing howl was heard, still distant but approaching through the cool autumn evening. "It's time you were off to bed."

"But it's not bedtime yet," a third voice chimed in, to be followed by a fourth. "Fiona's right, Mr. Farwanderer. We don't have to go to bed until the guests and the help start arriving in the common room. Father said so before he left."

"Tonight is different," replied the bard in

a tone strangely weary and tense for a man usually more energetic than some half his age. "Go upstairs now."

"Might as well not argue," Aidan said to his sisters, a sly look crossing his freckled face as he thought about the upstairs windows. "We'd better just go."

Halfway up the stairs, the eldest, Grainne, silently stopped her siblings. Through the railing, they saw the bard shudder, then cross the room to take a bottle of wine back to the fire. He settled himself uneasily in his chair and began to drink at an uncharacteristically quick pace, pausing every few gulps to peer over his shoulder at the windows and the door

that led outside to the lingering twilight.

Ignoring the bards orders, Grainne silently returned to the ground floor, the others following at her heels. "Mr. Farwanderer," she began, but faltered when the surprised bard spat a mouthful of wine into the air. The nearly full bottle crashed to the rush-strewn floor.

"Child, what are you doing skulking behind me?" snapped the bard. He appeared more agitated than before. "I thought I sent you away!"

"You're afraid of something!" blurted Aidan, hoping to redirect the bard's anger. "It's the wolf outside, isn't it?"

Brendan Farwanderer paused, an angry



Artwork by Jim Holloway

banishment on his lips. He saw the concern on the faces of his charges, then swallowed and nodded, visibly controlling himself. "I am . . . concerned." He bent forward to put an arm across the boy's shoulders. "And yes, it is because of the howlings. But those are not the sounds of a wolf, and it is not the beast but the message he brings that worries me."

Hoping for the beginning of a story, Grainne drew her little sister Fiona to the child's usual seat at the foot of the bard's chair, but when Aidan made to go to the board for a bottle to replace the one lost, the storyteller restrained him. "No, boy, it is probably best that I not drink any more this evening. And I cannot afford to sit down for this tale, as I have preparations to make. Attend as you will, for I shall be moving a bit."

The bard began to assemble provisions and equipment on the room's center table, gathering them from the shelves of the inn's kitchen and storerooms with his single hand, his right. The children hesitated briefly before rising to their feet to follow him about.

"At a time just after you were born, Aidan, maybe ten years ago, I was on an expedition in the Imran Mountains. There were six of us: three warriors, an enchanter, a priest of Marduk, and myself. At first, we had no clear goals but to find adventure, win fame, and possibly make profit. Eventually, we got ourselves hired for a mission; to remove a troublesome band of gnolls from one mountain valley before they denuded it of all game. There was a single human village at the valley's end, and a few villagers had been attacked by these beasts when the former were out hunting in the wilds. It was feared that the gnolls would turn on the settlement once other prey became scarce.

"At first, we thought that it would be an easy thing to eliminate the gnolls, for we consistently found them in groups smaller than our own. In a few of the encounters, the gnolls we faced threw their weapons away and dropped to the ground in surrender."¹

The bard paused in his tale-telling to select a few dusty items from an alcove off of the inn's common room. As he pulled out a short sword, his voice became deeper and quieter.

"Unfortunately for those creatures, one of our warriors, Hrarfarr of Pah, was a forest-wise barbarian whose mountain tribe considered surrender to be the most dishonorable thing a man could do. Every time one of the gnolls put himself at our mercy, Hrarfarr immediately slew him. And none of the rest of us said a word to censure Hrarfarr, for it was both a matter of honor for him and of logistics for us. We could think of no way to deal with a growing collection of prisoners, and to release our enemies into the forests would have resulted in future attacks by an enemy forewarned."

Brendan Farwanderer's voice regained

its normal timbre. "After a few days of these skirmishes, Hrarfarr returned from scouting in the valley to announce that he had found the lair of the gnolls we'd been meeting individually thus far. We soon made for the ruined citadel where he said the gnolls were, but darkness fell as we arrived. Although we had set up some of our previous ambuscades at night, we decided that it would be best to use the advantage of full daylight for this assault. We believed—wrongly—that the nocturnal gnolls would be at a disadvantage.²

"The quality of Hrarfarr's scouting was soon proven, for our nearby quarry made the night almost unbearable with an hours-long chorus of the same laughing, barking howls that we heard earlier tonight. But there was a difference in the sounds we heard that night, something more sinister that set our hair on end and denied us anything but the most fitful of sleep. When the sun rose, we were still tired, and only Hrarfarr's exhortations prevented us from postponing our mission until another day.³

"We crept into the ruins, seeking to eliminate the perimeter guards one by one and thus spring upon the main camp without warning. At first, this seemed to be successful, as we encountered only solitary or paired gnolls as we had in the days previously. All surrendered, to be slain by Hrarfarr or the other fighters. We had silenced more than a few guards when Marduk's priest noticed something disquieting. Our most recent victim was armed not with the simple club we'd encountered to that point, but with a curious weapon made of a pair of short iron bars linked by a chain, which he used in a most facile manner to disarm one of our fighters before finally surrendering and being despatched. This weapon the priest identified as a flindbar, and he informed us that the creatures we faced were not normal gnolls at all, but a tougher and more intelligent variety referred to as flinds.⁴ But we were already committed and so made nothing of this information.

"After a few more of our little ambushes, we found the tables turned on us." The bard paused at a dark memory. "The flinds had sacrificed a number of their own in order to lure us deeper into the ruins, to an area of *their* choosing. Upon engaging our next pair of beastmen in melee, the toppled pillars and ruined houses spewed forth flinds at all quarters.⁵ We were set upon by scores of them, those in the forefront wielding their flindbars with blinding speed. Quite contrary to our designs, they split our party asunder before we could assume a proper defensive posture.

"In little time at all, Hrarfarr and I were isolated from the others, surrounded and unable to retreat. After a few moments more, all other sounds of combat ceased; we two were the only surviving remnant of our band.

"Much to my surprise, the flinds did not

press their advantage. Rather, they retreated a pace and took defensive stances as if waiting for something. Before I could turn to my remaining companion and suggest a prudent course of action, he bellowed his barbaric war cry and charged forward, to be bludgeoned to death from numerous directions in less time than it takes to tell of it."

Brendan was silent for a moment, remembering, before he continued. "Knowing that I had little hope of fighting my way out, I realized what it was the flinds were waiting for. Mimicking the actions of the many defeated flinds we had slain, I dropped my sword and fell to the ground in the center of the circle of my enemies, praying that I had not misjudged them.

"After removing from me anything that could be used as a weapon and binding me securely, these flinds began arguing among themselves, barking at the top of their voices with only occasional glances at their prisoner. Before long, one, evidently their leader, turned to me and began to ask questions in a variety of strange tongues, the third of which, Orcish, I understood. Once he had found a language we held in common, he immediately ordered all his tribe to conduct their argument in that tongue, 'for the benefit of our guest,' he said.

"To my dismay, they were fighting over the method of my execution. One suggestion was that I be sold to a party known as the Human-Hunters, whom I was later told were a clan of gnolls that stalked and ate humans to the exclusion of all other races, even keeping a few alive in pens to be used for ritual sacrifices to their evil god. But my captors were too revenge-hungry to allow others to sacrifice me as their totem.⁶

"That option discarded, some recommended that I be entered into slavery, suggesting some sort of ritual disfigurement to avenge the deaths of those flinds whose honorable surrenders my party had betrayed, but agreement could not be reached on what the disfigurement would involve: eyes, ears, both, more, whatever."

"Hands?" whispered Aidan, prompting tears to well up in little Fiona's eyes. The children involuntarily glanced at the place where the bard's left arm ended in a stump.

"No, not hands. A slave without hands is of little worth, Aidan. Those who wanted my hands removed suggested that only as a preliminary to other tortures.

"Finally, the hotheads won out over those advocating slavery, and it was decided that I was to be slowly roasted alive. But before they completed preparations for my pyre, a ripple appeared in the ranks of flinds surrounding me, and one flind approached, accompanied by a trio of foul undead.⁷

"This one was apparently the highest-ranking witch doctor in the tribe, and he came making a demand. His son and apprentice had been killed in one of our

earlier ambushes. As the shaman put it, his son had been stolen from this world by our party. As I had already been condemned to death, he demanded that my execution be in the form of a ritual death and rebirth as his new son: a man stolen from the world of humans and forcibly adopted into the clan of the flind.⁸

"The leader of those demanding my death was apparently the mightiest warrior of the lot whose name translated to Grinds-Bone-To-Dust in Orcish. He stepped forward and told the witch doctor, whose name was All-Fear-His-Howl, that my fate was sealed and that nothing could be done to change his mind. The witch doctor was not easily dissuaded and began to harangue the warrior—at first in Orcish, as they had both been speaking for my benefit, but eventually reverting to their own tongue as the argument became more heated.

"As the volume of their howling increased, the two made threatening gestures at each other. Grinds-Bone-To-Dust swung his flindbar within inches of All-Fear-His-Howl's face, while the latter in turn brought forth various magical tokens and threatened dire enchantments in the warrior's direction. The fur on both of them stood on end, making them look half again as large and fearsome to me, the object of their squabble.

"Finally, the witch doctor gained the upper hand when he gestured his undead guardians forward to stand at his side, then presented one particularly powerful talisman that I later was told would have summoned a special unholy assistant directly from their demonic lord.⁹

"The warrior's fur immediately fell back to its normal place, and he seemed to shrink in the face of the witch doctor's threat. Backing away, he made to leave. But as his eyes lit upon me, the hatred he obviously still harbored for the other flind was revealed. A shrewd look appeared on him, and he raised himself erect to inform the assembled band that he respected All-Fear-His-Howl's decision and would personally insure that I, whom he dubbed Long-Legged-Child, became a perfect example of a flind. For if I failed in any respect, he would slay not only me for my failing, but also the witch doctor and his entire family line for forcing an imperfection on the tribe.

"Over the course of the next year, I was forcibly taught much flind lore by my so-called father, who feared that my mistakes would cost him his life. I learned even their history and the intricacies of their language and social structure. I was treated not as a human changeling but exactly as a flind. Thus, I was bruised and beaten many a time by males, females, and even those pups who realized they could get away with it, usually led by the offspring of Grinds-Bone-To-Dust who had appointed themselves my tormentors.¹⁰ Violence is integral to the life of a flind, as I learned to my grief; it is part of the process of tough-



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CRUSADERS *of the* DARK SAVANT

The Sequel to *Bane of the Cosmic Forge*

ening the tribe, or so they see it. This treatment went on until I gained the skill with the flindbar needed to defend myself against my more powerful 'relatives.'¹¹

"In retrospect, it is well that I did not fall into the claws of common gnolls. The flinds, though they share many of the manners of their less pleasant cousins, are more likely to obey the rulings of their leaders and work together as a whole. Being now considered a flind, I was immune to outright murder. Had I been among gnolls, one group or the other would have done for me long ago, regardless of what the witch doctor had decided. It was poor comfort that long year.

"At first, I was resolved to play the part of a happy convert. But before the year was out, I could no longer play the role, as I was introduced to a practice that I could not be forced to suffer. During one of the tribe's nomadic migrations, we came across an isolated farmhouse that the warriors attacked. I could do nothing to save those who were murdered there. Instead of eating the bodies of those they slew, the flinds abandoned them to go through the gate to a recently dedicated cemetery behind the house, where they immediately set to digging."

"When they came upon the bodies there, All-Fear-His-Howl stepped forward and inspected them all, claiming the one in the best repair as his own and magnanimously

declaring the rest to be the property of the warriors, who immediately set to squabbling over who got first pick of the disinterred remains. Once the flinds had settled the question of rank, they began to eat the bodies. Before my reeling stomach could betray me, the witch doctor pulled me aside to demonstrate another atrocity.

"He forced me to carry the corpse he had selected to the site of the massacre of the farm's inhabitants and, as I followed him, I was followed by his trio of ghouls, all hoping to somehow get a taste of the body. I was ordered to place the corpse next to the remains of the newly dead. All-Fear-His-Howl then began to perform some ritual over the bodies.

"After an interminable period, the exhumed body began to twitch and rock, while the recent kills became flaccid and empty of all contents, now little more than a collection of bones and skin. And then, suddenly, the jerking corpse's eyes opened, and it stood up, the horrible stench of the dead assaulting my senses like never before. The witch doctor had created a more powerful undead servant in the form of a ghast.¹³

"After seeing these depravities, I was awakened to the fact that I had almost resigned myself to spending the rest of my life with these monsters. Nothing could then convince me to continue in their unholy company. I renewed my interest in

delivering myself from them. Eventually, I found an opportunity to escape when my tribe encountered a small tribe of orcs that we set upon. While the flind tribe was engaged in the wholesale slaughter of their neighbors, I made good my escape. As I have not encountered a flind in the years since, I made the assumption that I had been forgotten by them, or that they had written me off as if I were a bad debt."

As far as the children could tell, Brendan Farwanderer's packing was finished. He had collected all of the materials a man would need for a journey of a week or more, including a shirt of fine chain and the sword he'd handled earlier. For some reason, he didn't put on the armor or pick up his pack; he merely stood, silently staring at his equipment.

"Mr. Farwanderer—" began Aidan, but he never finished his thought.

Without warning, the door to the inn banged open. The children jumped; the bard did not move. As a cold evening wind brushed past them, what appeared to be an elderly or crippled man shuffled painfully in, supported by the strong arm of another, apparently younger, man.¹⁴ Both were wrapped from head to toe in thick cloaks, with even their faces covered and hidden inside dark cowls. Neither of them unwrapped himself, nor did either move to sit near the banked fire or at one of the long benches along the walls. For almost a

minute, the older one stood hunched in the doorway, his unseen face apparently directed at the bard, who kept his back stiffly turned to the newcomers.

"Long-legs, come," the old one said in a harsh, muffled accent, breaking the tense silence. His mouth did not seem right, as if it were more an animal's muzzle and unused to speaking human words. "Leave pups. Time now be adult!"

"Yes, a moment," the bard said, then focused his attention on the children. His face was drawn and white. "Every gnoll or flind must prove himself to his clan by stalking and killing a creature from his tribe's totem race, thereafter to be counted an adult. If he does not perform this duty within the span of one generation, he is slain by the leaders of the tribe, to prevent the taint of cowardice from spreading."¹⁵ I made good my escape before performing this task, but there is now a delegation from my tribe, undoubtedly composed of Grinds-Bone-To-Dust and a party of his sons and grandsons, waiting for me now outside."

He paused. When he tried again to speak, his words caught on something and he had to clear his throat before beginning anew. "If I do not do their bidding, they will slay my 'father' and then do their best to kill all of his kin, including any human children they mistakenly count as All-Fear-His-Howl's adopted grandchildren."

"And his true grandchildren, 'uncle,'" growled the able-bodied stranger in rough Common, having overheard the conversation from across the room. "They will kill us all if you fail your tribe. Unless someone from your own family doesn't kill you first, you who runs from adulthood."

The bard moved again, folding the mail shirt into his pack and easing the satchel across his shoulders. The children were silent, stunned by the implications of these last statements. Finally, Grainne spoke up. "Shouldn't we be doing something?" she whispered, her eyes on the visitors and her arms reaching down for her siblings, to pull them close.

"We could call out the town militia," Aidan suggested in a remarkably restrained manner.

"No, Aidan," said the bard softly. "Grinds-Bone-To-Dust's forces will be waiting for just such an excuse to slaughter all in this town without fear of repercussions from the rest of the tribe. When your father returns home from the markets of Thamox, tell him this tale and tell him to circumspectly prepare the defense of the town, but warn him to make no overtly hostile moves. You should be safe enough alone until the tavern help and guests arrive in a few hours, if I give the flinds no cause to doubt my willingness to comply with their bloody custom. And if you bar the doors and windows, as I had meant to do."



Turning, Farwanderer gingerly picked up his sword, then crossed the room to put it back in its alcove. He returned with a well-wrapped bundle that he placed on the table.

"The word 'flind' is thought by some to have once been merely the name of a particularly strong gnoll clan. If so, that clan is now a thing unto itself. 'Flind' means 'cannibal' or 'gnoll-eater' in Gnollish.¹⁶ Flinds, though they are the masters of all gnolls, hate their lesser cousins scarcely less than they hate all other beings. To become an adult, a flind must slay a gnoll to prove the prey's unworthiness and the hunter's superiority. The howling that we heard earlier was that of All-Fear-His-Howl, telling any gods, flinds, or gnolls within hearing that his 'son' will meet his obligation tonight, or die trying. And thus, I must go." The bard's voice dropped to a husky whisper, "If the gods of man go with me, I will return an adult in the eyes of the flind a few days hence, and I will be able to order my . . . kin, as it were, to leave us in peace."

Removing the oiled cloth from the parcel, Brendan hefted a pair of chain-linked iron bars in the lamp light. Then he left the inn, closely following his father and nephew in their all-enveloping cloaks.

Footnotes

Flinds and gnolls are detailed in the AD&D® 2nd Edition *Monstrous Compendium* (under "Gnoll") and in the AD&D 1st Edition *Monster Manual I* (page 46) and FIEND FOLIO® tome (page 39). Also see "The humanoids" in the *Best of DRAGON® Magazine* anthology, vol. V, pages 54-57.

1. Unlike some other evil humanoids, gnolls and flinds rarely continue a losing fight to the point of their own deaths. If outnumbered or beaten, they attempt to flee or, if that's not possible, surrender by throwing away their weapons and falling face down on the ground, leaving themselves to the attacker's mercy. Because it is standard gnoll behavior, they recognize the same sort of posture when performed by enemies (including such variations as standing upright with empty palms turned outward or with empty hands in the air, or even approaching with an empty hand out-thrust to be shaken). Usually, unless extremely hungry, enraged, or when attacking a totem creature (see note 6 below), they respect such behavior—for a while, at least.

2. Gnolls have 60' infravision and prefer to hunt at night. Their senses are all animal-sharp, so that they can follow a scent day or night almost as well as a human could follow a visible trail during the day. They can see quite well in the dark, and their hearing is as good as a watchdog's. If given a choice between attacking a human target in light or in darkness, they chose the dark, as their opponent is at a disadvantage. Gnolls and flinds are not at all hampered by sunlight and, unlike orcs, fight during the day with

no penalties.

3. The laughing, hyenalike howls of the flinds and gnolls are social challenges that list the personal history of the howler, including his lineage and family history, his name and personal triumphs, and finally the descriptive threats of what will occur when the gnoll defeats an enemy in combat. In special cases, when a gnoll or flind expects to face a member of his clan totem-race (see note 6 below), the challenge will be made longer by a detailing of the clan history.

A normal challenge lasts as long as 10 minutes (depending on the age and history of the howler), while an extended challenge can last longer than half an hour. As it would take hours for all members of a large group to make their challenges, these howls will not be heard every time one encounters gnolls, but only when considerable warning of an attack is deemed harmless.

Tribal etiquette requires that howlers take turns, with leaders making the first challenges, followed by the rest in descending order of rank within the band. If, as often happens, two gnolls begin their challenges simultaneously, the two will raise the volume of their recital while also expanding upon their personal glories in an attempt to force the other to stop howling (an admission of inferiority). If neither gives in, the dispute is settled in one of

two ways: Normal gnolls enter into a duel that rarely continues to the death (see note 1), while flinds leave the matter until the two disputants enter combat with an outside enemy, with the valor shown on the battlefield deciding the matter.

Any group subjected to an extended bout of gnoll-howling (longer than one hour) will have to make a morale roll in order to resist the urge to rout. This applies only to NPCs; player characters should be told that they feel exceptionally uncomfortable, and the actions of any NPCs in the group, including animals, must be rolled for. Even if the morale check is made, future checks will be at -1 (cumulative daily, up to -10) during the next day. Thus, in an extended campaign against a large number of gnolls, the nightly howling is almost assured to cause some desertions in the ranks of non-gnolls.

Those who can understand the barked language of gnolls or flinds can ignore the effects of this howling, as they can concentrate on the meaning of the howls instead of the nature of them. Of course, a long night of graphic death threats may not be conducive to sleep, either.

4. While the physical differences between gnolls and flinds are apparent to one versed in monster lore, to an ignorant warrior in the middle of melee these two races are indistinguishable. It is more likely that outward signs, like the flind's

preference for blunt weapons (such as flindbars), will serve to distinguish the two for the average adventurer better than intrinsic body features such as the shape of ear or the slope of brow, or differences in lifestyle that are only exposed to those making in-depth studies.

5. Although they travel in groups of 2-12, gnolls and flinds are often encountered as solitary individuals who turn out to be outrunners or stragglers from a slightly larger group. Gnolls are individually very independent, so an encountered group of 2-12 might be spread out over a few hundred square yards of woods, in pairs or alone in a round or two, all close in on the sounds of an attack against one of their number. Still, while nominally chaotic, gnolls respond to strong threats by grouping together to fight the menace before splitting up again when safe. Flinds are far more organized, having standard tactics and a rough (if abused) chain of command. Flinds sometimes mimic this loose formation anyway to lure the unwary into traps that normal gnolls would rarely think of nor be able to organize.

6. Gnoll society is divided into a number of clans, each with its own clan totem—a specific race of prey that has religious significance to the clan. Among other ritual uses for these totem creatures is ritual sacrifice to Yeenoghu (AD&D 1st Edition *Monster Manual I*, pages 19-20,

and 1st Edition *Legends & Lore*, page 94), as the sacrifice of a creature that isn't of the clan's totem race is unlikely to win the archfiend's favor. Gnoll tribes led by flinds, as well as flind tribes themselves, sometimes keep specimens of the tribal totem for just such purposes.

The most common totem races are goblins, humans, gnomes, halflings, and elves (but not dwarves, as they are too stoic during combat and torture to be interesting). Some gnoll clans have totems that are stronger than individual gnolls, and their tribes are composed of only the bravest of gnolls, but they are rarely large tribes. Such clans include the ettin and giant hunters.

Conversely, some large tribes have weak totems, such as kobolds or nonintelligent prey like deer or zebras. These tribes have a low status among gnolls, but they are also quite long-lived due to the ease of conforming to the demands of their religion.

The large gnoll clans are divided into numerous smaller tribes of 20-200 adult males (young and females are almost ignored by the males). Two tribes from the same clan will almost never fight with each other, often joining together for short periods of time to attack particularly large targets. Unrelated tribes are generally less friendly; the only time a tribe of gnolls won't leap upon a tribe of a different clan (except when prevented by a strong lead-

er) is when the other tribe is of equal or greater strength.

The purpose of combat between tribes is not to kill the opposing tribe, but to either gain slaves from among the survivors or merely to establish which of the two tribes is the stronger in a way that neither can dispute. To avoid such battles, obviously weaker tribes will sometimes pay tribute to the stronger in the form of slaves (taken from among their own slaves, not from the tribe's members), especially if they have slaves from the stronger tribe's totem race.

Because they are trained in specific tactics to use against their totem creature, and because of the ferocity religious fervor adds to their actions, gnolls have +1 to hit, damage, and morale when attacking their totem race. Unfortunately, this ferocity means that gnolls attacking their totem tend to lose themselves in the activity. Thus, they won't accept the surrender of a totem creature if it is offered in the heat of combat.

7. All gnolls and flinds worship the archfiend Yeenoghu, and a few gnolls (two in 100) and flinds (three in 100) become shamans or witch doctors who have a closer and more powerful relationship to their deity. Gnolls can be shamans of up to 5th level, or witch doctors of up to 5th level as clerics and 2nd level as mages. Flinds can attain the same shaman level as



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normal gnolls, but as witch doctors they can reach 3rd level as mages.

As with other tribal spell-casters, the spell selection of gnolls and flinds is extremely limited. Unlike other races, these spell-casters typically choose spells to enhance their own power, not necessarily for the betterment of the tribe. Gnolls do not hold any great respect for their shamans, but they do fear them, and fear is a more effective form of command in the chaotic gnoll society. Flinds respect their spell-caster but still curse them in public.

Their favored spells include: *command*, *protection from evil* (as gnolls often fear each other more than good-aligned outsiders), *shillelagh*, *enthall*, *hold person* (to emulate the paralysis power of their deity's chosen undead henchmen), *armor*, *shield*, *invisibility*, *irritation*, and *strength*.

In addition to their personal powers, gnoll spell-casters have other ways of instilling fear in lesser beings, the most common of these being that they are often (60%) accompanied by 1-6 ghouls that they automatically control, as these undead are a gift from their deity.

8. Those who surrender to gnolls will usually be killed or made slaves, but a rare few of those taken will be adopted into the tribe to replace tribe members killed during the capturing process. Such adoptions are usually only made of gnolls from other tribes, but there have been cases when members of other races are so adopted (this is more common among flinds).

9. Another gift that Yeenoghu occasionally grants his most powerful shamans (those of 5th level) is the ability to summon a special form of guardian, a giant, glowing, undead hyaenodon called a shoosuva. For more details concerning gnoll shamans and the shoosuva, see "The Humanoids," in the *Best of DRAGON Magazine* anthology, vol. V.

10. The lair of a flind tribe is similar to that of normal gnolls. It contains 10-100 males, females totalling up to 75% of that number, and young (who mature at five years of age) up to twice the number of females. Females are as powerful as males but are rarely if ever proficient with flindbars. In addition, there will be one slave (of any race) for every five males in the tribe. For every 20 normal male flinds, there is one leader (as described in the *Monstrous Compendium*), and the strongest of these will be considered the chieftain.

Experience point values for the various flind types are: normal flinds—65; flindbar-armed flinds: 120; flind leaders (all with flindbars; includes chieftain): 175. Experience-point values of shamans and witch doctors must be calculated using the tables on page 47 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

11. The flindbar is a weapon similar to the Oriental nunchaku, but slightly smaller and less damaging. Anyone but a wizard who is adopted into a flind clan can learn this weapon in a few months if he has an



*I have died of untold fear
and horror,
but my secret is safe—
for now*

CRUSADERS *of the* DARK SAVANT

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open proficiency slot. The flindbar can be used for parrying and for normal strike/thrust attacks, getting two attacks per round and doing 1-4 hp damage on each hit. It cannot be used for called shots or disarming attacks (as described on pages 65-66 of the *Complete Fighter's Handbook*), but when used against small- to man-sized foes holding weapons, successful flindbar attacks automatically disarm opponents who fail to save vs. wands (with two-handed weapons granting the holder a bonus of +4 on the save).

Anyone without proficiency in the flindbar who attempts to use one in combat has (along with the normal nonproficiency penalty to hit) a chance of injuring himself when attempting any strike, parry, or disarming maneuver. If a 1 is rolled on the attack die, not counting any modifiers at all, then the user of the flindbar has hit himself, taking 1-4 hp damage and dropping the weapon if a save vs. wands is failed. (If the DM is already using the optional critical fumble system from the *DMG*, page 61, a nonproficient flindbar user will suffer this fumble result on a roll of a 1 or 2.)

12. One group of scents that the gnoll's keen sense of smell is practiced at detecting are those involved in the burial of dead humanoids. If the scents of freshly turned earth and dead meat reaches their snouts, they are more likely to seek out this

source of food than they are to go through the trouble of hunting on their own. While the scent of slightly rotten flesh is revolting to a human, gnolls and flinds—the worshipers of the prince of ghouls—find it almost irresistible. If flinds are settled into an area and are not desperately hungry, they sometimes bury their kills in a guarded area in order to "age" them as a delicacy. Most gnoll tribes have yet to take up this practice.

13. While Yeenoghu grants the gift of ghouls and shoosuvas to both gnoll and flind spell-casters, one gift is reserved for his more intelligent priests. Some 20% of flind shamans of 4th or higher level know of a special ritual to create a ghast. A spell caster with this spell in his repertoire rarely has more than one ghast in his entourage, because ghosts are more independent than ghouls, obeying commands only 50% of the time (although they will never willingly attack the shaman who created them). Another method of ghast creation is described on page 19 of the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® supplement, REF5 Lords of Darkness*.

14. Because gnolls are usually encountered at least partly if raggedly dressed, one does not always notice the fact that their legs are short for their body length, if one uses the human form as a standard for comparison. Although this makes a gnoll look somewhat clumsy to differently

proportioned humanoids, it does not in any way hamper their movements. The normal walk of a gnoll resembles the rolling stride of a human sailor returning to land after a long ocean voyage. When a gnoll is at a run, he will bend deeply at the waist so that his arms are almost brushing the ground. This awkward, hunched running posture becomes more pronounced as a gnoll ages, so that the elderly (those over 30 years old) often maintain this bent attitude even when walking or just standing still.

15. This requirement to kill a member of the totem race in order to be considered an adult gnoll is not a hard and fast one. Small or weak bands tend to ignore the law in order to preserve their population, while tribes with totems such as a troll or hill giant usually relax the rule to allow a party of adolescent gnolls to attack one of these creatures in concert, with all of the survivors claiming the kill. Normally, this initiation rite is undertaken when the young gnoll is 8-10 years old, but some (such as those in giant-hunting tribes) don't perform this task until their prime adulthood, 15-25 years of age. If a gnoll is adopted into a different gnoll clan, he is considered a child again and must fulfill this requirement anew in order to become an adult of the new clan.

16. Many flinds have the gnoll as their

totem animal, so it is unlikely that a player character will ever have to worry about the bonuses flinds receive when attacking their totems (the bonuses are the same as those for normal gnolls). Because flinds have dominated other gnoll clans for unknown centuries, they hold themselves as if they were a different species, never stooping so low as to voluntarily mate with their weaker cousins. This dominant position is made easier by the flinds higher intelligence and the use of the flindbar. **Ω**

Letters

From what I recall in the original letter, I have come up with these solutions to the problem:

1. Give Norb to Andre and Gwendolyn, since there will always be someone looking out for him. Let Andre and Gwendolyn switch back and forth on adventures.
 2. Joint custody may also be a solution. It would be hard for Norb, but both parties would be satisfied. (This should be a last resort.)
 3. Give Norb to Sir Ronis, but on one condition: to never leave Norb unless it was with someone he could trust.

I'm still in favor of advancing the campaign by 16 years to let Norb go adventuring on his own. It's a heck of a lot simpler that way. But a cruel DM could force all three "parents" to live together and care for Norb, who will no doubt love the arrangement and take every advantage of it. ("Norb, I'm sure Daddy Ronis will be happy to buy you another Teenage Mutant Ninja Tarrasque if you would only tell him where you hid his bill-guisarme collection.")

Dear Dragon,

I'm writing to talk about girls. It may not seem important, but for me as a player, a DM, and a boy, it is. Where are girls at role-playing games? I'm 15 years old now, and I have been playing AD&D® games for about a year. It may not seem like much, but I have talked to long-time players and we have all had the same experience: We've never played with girls. When I DMed for a group of about six people, I always encouraged them to bring some girls along to the session, but none came. I began to panic and took a decision to go wandering around the streets and asking girls what they think about the AD&D game. Well, the results weren't that good. Of the 70 girls I asked, about 80% looked at me and *[The editor apologizes, but he is unable to continue with this letter. It's just too cruel.]*

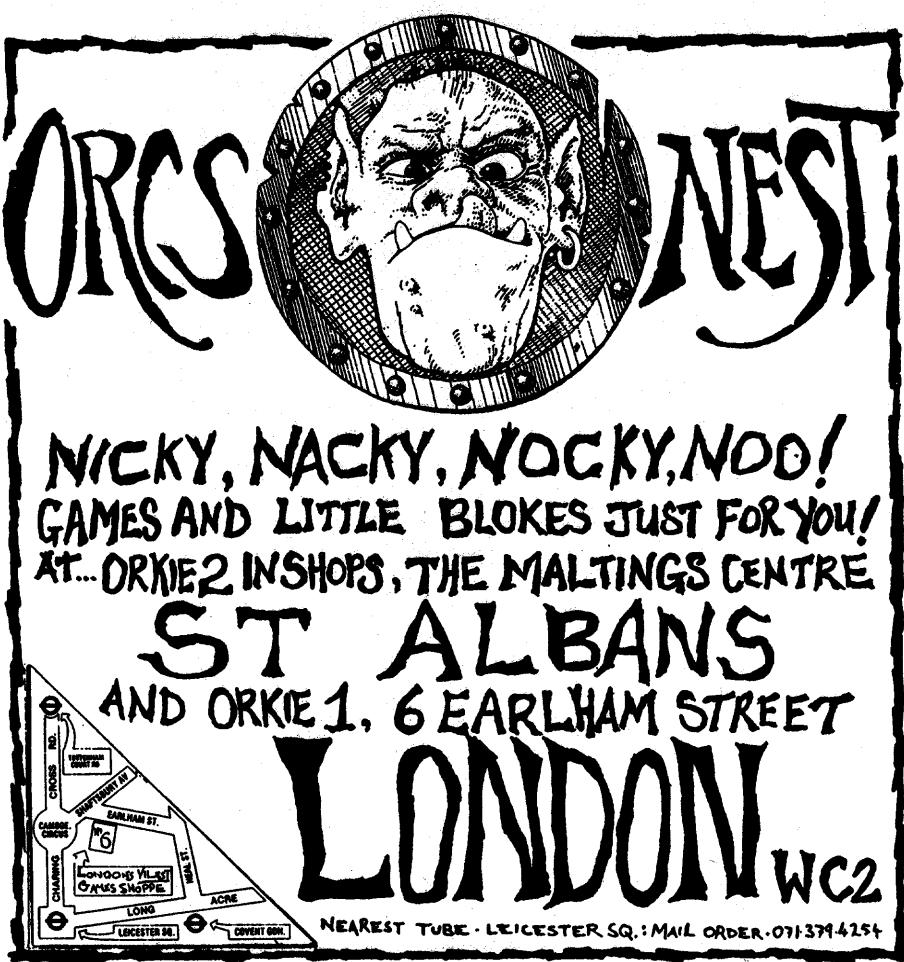
Dear TSR

I have come to write about a question. When Bronson was the DM he brought us into the fucher, and his character Lambirant was shot by a .44 and he said it would only do 1d4 points of damage. Well I said no way. So he is telling me a bullet does the same damage of an arrow. So we both desided to write to you people down at TSR, well we hope you will give us an idil of what a bullet would do. As in hit point wise.

When all of the characters went back into time Dacian who is my character brought 5 guns with him, as in .44, .45, and .357 magnum. So before Dacian goes shooting the guns we wanted to write you.

The best advice I can give you is that it's never too late to get a girlfriend. Ω

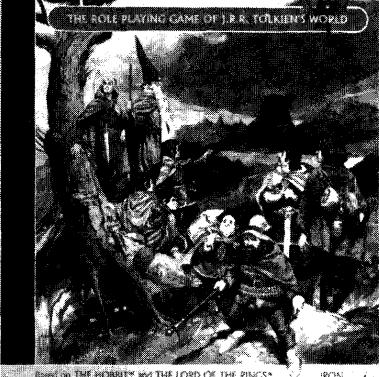
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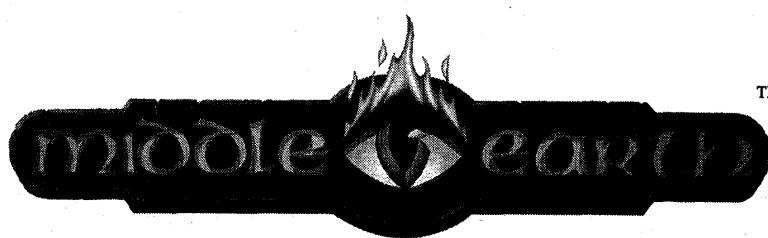
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The chill wind moaned like a hundred voices calling out a half-hearted warning. Perhaps they had done so too many times before... to no avail.

I turned to look one more time out across this valley. 'Desolate' didn't seem a harsh enough word to describe this tortured land... it looked like the life had been sucked out of it. For miles in every direction loomed structures older than any civilization in the world.

Holding aloft my glimmering azure wand, I turned back toward the tomb's waiting maw. I entered the Halls of the Dead.

Notes on the Emerian Ruins
By the Loremaster Selas Vey
Last Entry



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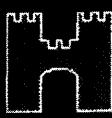
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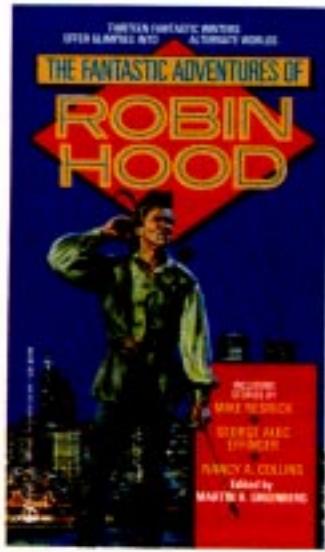
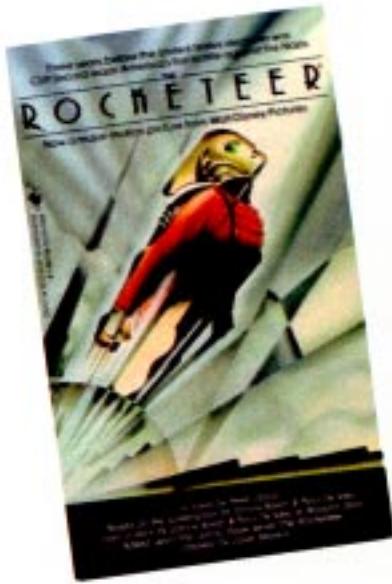
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THE ROCKETEER

Peter David

Bantam Falcon 0-553-29322-2 \$4.99

Here's a novel with all kinds of potential gaming hooks. It's got a superhero. It's translated from a motion picture script that was itself based on a series of comic-book adventures. And the setting, Hollywood in the late 1930s, is just right for certain kinds of pulp-adventure campaigns. But the real reason to check out *The Rocketeer* is that it's a lively, engaging story that's a lot of fun to read.

Our hero is crackerjack pilot Cliff Secord, whose brand-new stunt plane is the chief casualty of a high-speed chase as the story begins. What Cliff doesn't know at first is what everyone was after: an experimental rocket pack developed by Howard

Hughes for America's war effort. But when he finds the device hidden in a hangar, it seems like the perfect means of paying off the feisty promoter who's sponsoring the series of air shows in which Cliff appears professionally.

But bailing himself out of debt is the least of Cliffs problems. The FBI, the local criminal syndicate, and screen star Neville Sinclair—not to mention Howard Hughes—are all after the rocket pack, and after a string of dangerous confrontations and narrow escapes, both Cliff and his girlfriend wind up high over Los Angeles for a showdown in (and on) an enormous Nazi zeppelin.

Author Peter David does a first-class job

on three counts: maintaining a strong sense of period, showing Cliff's gradual mastery of the rocket's abilities, and giving the novel its own unique texture rather than merely transcribing the screenplay. The Hollywood setting comes across especially well, and David has fun with cameo appearances by performers of the day, in bits that you won't have seen at the theater.

Superhero aficionados should find *The Rocketeer* among the best novels in its category, whether original or adapted from the screen—well ahead, for instance, of the recent line of Batman mysteries. This is adventure done with respect as well as style, and it's not to be missed.

FALLEN ANGELS

Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle, and Michael Flynn

Baen 0-671-72052-X \$5.95

I have very mixed feelings about *Fallen Angels*. On one hand, it's a lively chase yarn, and there are a lot of sly in-jokes that veteran SF fans will doubtless chuckle knowingly over. But the near-future society in which the tale is placed is far too simplistic to take seriously, and it's played much too straight to feel like satire.

As the book opens, there's a functioning space habitat in orbit around Earth, but it's forced to operate without ground-based support, as radical antitechnologists have taken over governments and (among other things) pulled the plug on the resources needed to keep in contact. This governmental switch has had two notable side effects: glaciers racing down from the Arctic have covered most of Canada and are working on the northern U.S., and a great deal of subtle but powerful persecution has been directed at science fiction and its fans, who are now considered not merely peculiar but downright dangerous.

Not surprisingly, though, SF fans are the first to react when an accident causes a pair of astronauts from the orbiting colony to crash-land in North Dakota. The government wants the marooned flyers, who were "stealing" hydrogen from the atmosphere to replenish their habitat's supply, but the fans have an involved scheme to send them back into orbit aboard an untested orbital shuttle that's sitting idle in a museum in California.

As a caper adventure, this works reasonably well, with the SF crowd cast as geniuses at improvisational strategy while the government forces play the Keystone Kops, hampered in their efforts by technology they can't use and bystanders who cheerfully point them in the wrong direction.

The catch is that this government-by-environmentalism makes very little sense, particularly in its utter disdain for science fiction and its fans. Why, to start with, does "Green" philosophy equal a general opposition to technology? The novel doesn't explain this, and it's neither a logical nor practical generalization. If anything, SF fans as a group are likely to be both more environmentally conscious and more technically literate than non-fans. In the setting the novel postulates, they'd be running the country rather than fleeing the authorities.

In short, *Fallen Angels* doesn't work as speculation, and it's not credible as social criticism. The authors portray relationships that are adversarial when they should be cooperative, and generalize much too broadly about the groups they describe. Niven, Pournelle, and Flynn have written a funny novel, to be sure, but it's a book whose laughs are dark and cynical, and that's a bad sign. If this is how space-program advocates expect to build support for their visions, don't look for mankind to get back to the stars very soon.

HAWK'S FLIGHT

Carol Chase

Baen 0-671-72064-3 \$4.95

If the milieu in *Hawk's Flight* is based on a particular historical culture, I can't identify it; there are elements that might be traced to India or the Middle East, but other aspects of Carol Chase's setting seem Western in origin. Nonetheless, Chase builds a highly detailed, intriguing world in this novel, even if her material is sometimes a bit too dense for its own good.

Politically, the Pakajan peninsula is divided up into several city-states whose frequently competing interests are the targets of exploitation by the Bacmat Empire to the east and the Massadarans to the south. Not surprisingly, the guilds that control trade between the various cities wield a great deal of influence, and it's from the guilds that Chase draws her major characters.

The reluctant hero of the piece is textile merchant Taverik Zandro, whose role in the family business is uncomfortable at best. His father and older brother sneer at his sense of fair play and business ethics, but their own previous dealings have made a number of Taverik's customers less than pleased. Despite the obstacles, Taverik is doing fairly well for himself when trouble strikes. His home city is the target of a coup by followers of the mysterious Black Eagle, and a fellow merchant's startling secret may lie at the core of the power struggle.

Marko Kastazi's true identity is hidden beneath layers of deception and secrecy, and it takes Taverik most of the book to unravel all of the riddles surrounding his colleague. Less elusive, but more dangerous, is the Black Eagle, who seems to be a demon-god opposing the true deity of the Pakajans, one Zojikam. Chase is particularly effective in setting up the opposing gods and theologies, giving them clear, uncomplicated attributes and a faint Old Testament flavor.

For the most part, the characters are as well developed as the world (especially Taverik's self-serving father). That's a bit of a problem, in fact, as there are a great many characters, and adequately portraying them all requires some awkward shifting and balancing of viewpoints. The plot is also on the complicated side, enough so that even the glossaries in the back aren't entirely sufficient to keep the players and sides straight.

But despite its occasionally wobbly structure, *Hawk's Flight* is a vivid adventure in a landscape that Chase has taken a lot of trouble to invent. In that respect at least, it's an impressive book, and any DM who's ever designed a campaign world knows just how much work that kind of invention takes.

THE FANTASTIC ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD

Martin H. Greenberg, ed.

Signet 0-451-17053-9 \$3.99

The recent cinematic army of archers in Lincoln green, robbing from the rich and giving to the poor, all offered more or less traditional interpretations of the Robin Hood legend. That's not the case in this collection; contributors to this Martin Greenberg anthology provide science-fictional Robins, magical Robins, and Robins who abandon robbery for other careers. But though most of the individual stories are clever, wise, or nostalgic at the right moments, the overall effect is more uneven than satisfying.

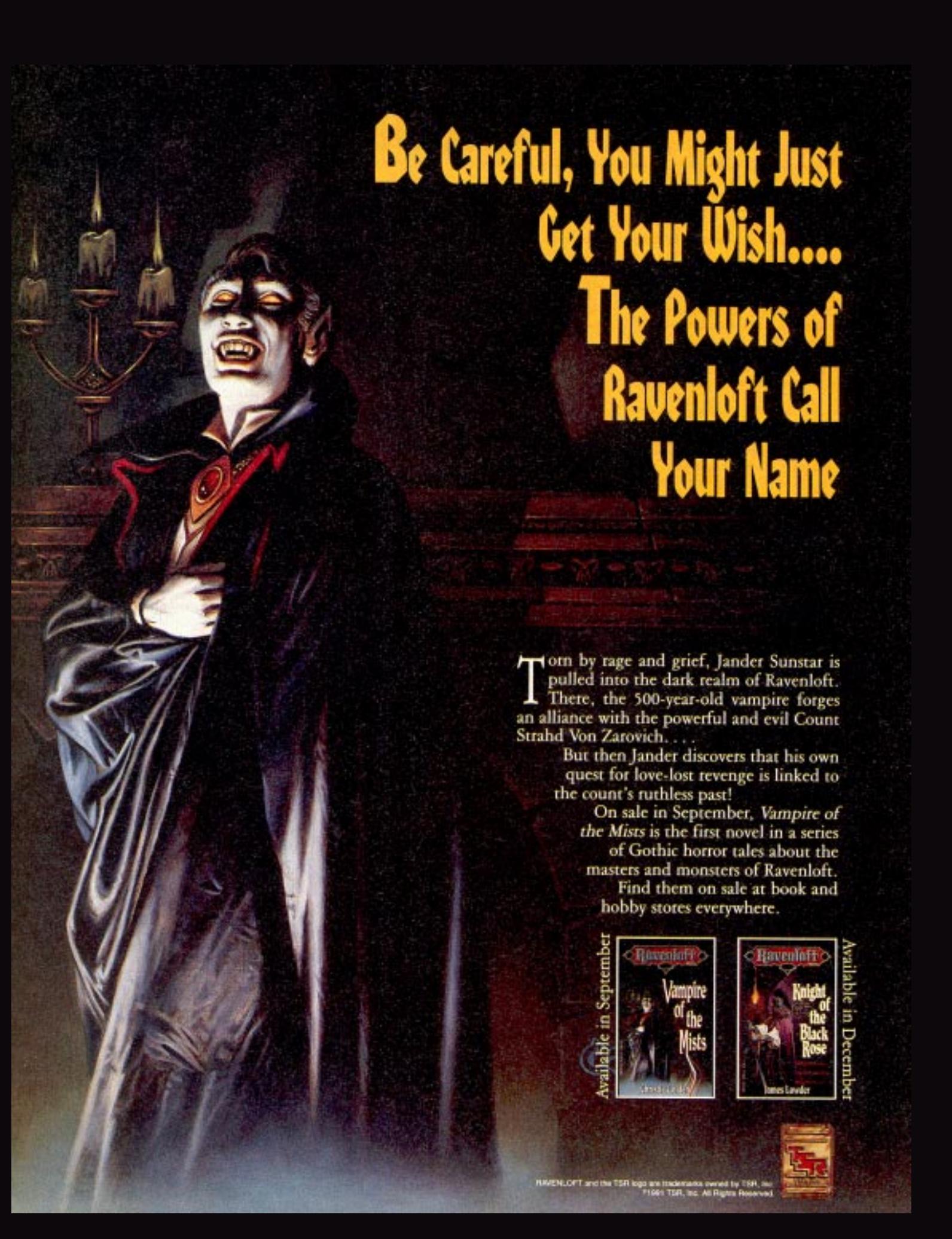
Several of the tales take a comic turn, generally to good effect. Among these, the most outrageous is easily George Alec Effinger's yarn about Maid Marian's shopping-duel with interdimensional traveler Muffy Birnbaum. Other winners are Laura Resnick, with a sly story that transplants modern capitalism into medieval Sherwood, and Brian Thomsen, who provides a crisp mystery that's partly hard-boiled detection and partly an exercise in computer gaming. Less successful are Elizabeth Scarborough, who loses control of an engaging but complicated premise involving environmental witchery, and Mike Resnick, whose monologue from Robin's Jewish mother has an even chance of generating either a guffaw or a "So what?", depending on the reader.

Best in a more serious vein are "The One-Eyed King," in which Nancy Collins gives Robin a dark twin with backing from even darker forces, and "Vivian," a faerie-edged tale of a boon that Robin Hood refuses to grant until the last possible moment. Stories from Matthew Costello and Barbara Delaplace are credible, if less polished, while Clayton Emery's contribution seems overly staged, Steve Rasnic Tem's strays too far into moralizing, and Nancy Holder's is simply odd.

But though the individual stories succeed more often than not, the collection as a whole suffers for lack of a firm context. It's not a shared-universe book, where the authors are working from a common vision of their chosen setting, but neither is it an ordinary theme anthology, where the link between stories is usually less specific and each writer is free to invent characters at will. In assembling this collection, Martin Greenberg presents thirteen different versions of Robin Hood, Little John, Maid Marian, and the rest, but doesn't give us a means of measuring the alternates against the "real" characters.

That's less a criticism than an observation, since identifying a single "real" Robin Hood legend is almost certainly impossible in the first place. All in all, *The Fantastic Adventures of Robin Hood* is mostly entertaining but best taken in small doses. Read all at once, the stories are unsettling. Taken one or two at a time, they may be easier to digest.

Continued on page 100



Be Careful, You Might Just Get Your Wish.... The Powers of Ravenloft Call Your Name

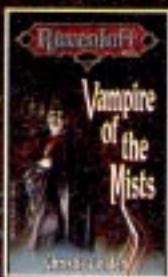
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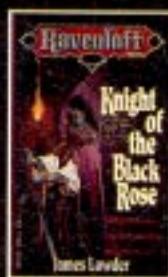
On sale in September, *Vampire of the Mists* is the first novel in a series of Gothic horror tales about the masters and monsters of Ravenloft.

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FORUM



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I am writing with some comments on Andrew Bartmess's letter (issue #162). First of all, Christian gamers are not as small a minority as you may think. I am a Christian Dungeon Master (although some may call that a contradiction!), and all but one of my five players attend the same church I do.

But my main issue is that of the assassin. I find Mr. Bartmess's opinion of the assassin as nothing more than a short-lived NPC to be rather one-sided. True, the stereotypical assassin is considered to be a cowardly backstabber who lasts only a few rounds in a "fair fight" against the brave paladin sent to destroy him. But this brings up some questions.

First, if dying is the hallmark of the assassin class, why does anyone choose to be an assassin?

Second, couldn't there be exceptions to the rule? I mean, are all assassins created equal? What about the street urchin whose town is invaded by legions of soldiers from a rival kingdom? He wants to defend the town, but the ruling magistrate has decided to sacrifice the town in favor of accumulating a larger militia and striking back later. Our urchin is only 14, hardly old enough to fight back against tens of thousands of trained soldiers. Feeling stealth is the only alternative, he joins the assassins' guild to *learn the skills*. He has no intention of taking pay for his work; his only desire is to cause a tremendous amount of havoc. Note that with the percentage chance to assassinate, he could wipe out a single camp by starting with the lookouts and then going to the men sleeping in their tents. He may be using the skills of an evil class, but is he committing evil acts?

Some may say that striking an unarmed, undefended opponent is evil, but consider this: How many of your characters have used rings, spells, or potions granting *invisibility*? There are dozens of magical items and spell effects that allow or improve stealth, including the spells of *invisibility*, *improved invisibility*, and *pass without trace*, and the following magical items: *rings of invisibility and inaudibility*, *cloaks* (and *boots*) of *elvenkind*, *dust of disappearance*, and *hats of disguise*. If stealth is evil, how is it that elves are known for being good and yet manufacture *cloaks and boots of elvenkind*, have thieves as characters, and have rules for moving silently when alone? In no way is stealth evil.

Now to the subject of attacking sleeping opponents. Who out there has cast a *sleep* spell on an opponent to allow themselves or their party a few extra hits? How many people have finished off an unconscious opponent to prevent

his rescue and subsequent revenge? In the *Best of DRAGON Magazine Anthology*, vol. 2, is an article by Gary Gygax on the difference between goodness and idiocy ("Good isn't stupid: Paladins & rangers," originally from DRAGON issue #38). He used the example of a ranger who was required by the referee to guard a sleeping wyvern until it proved itself to be evil by attacking the party. Mr. Gygax asked how many lives were being put at stake by that choice of action? At least those of the ranger and his party, as well as anyone else the wyvern may attack in its lifetime if they fail to slay it when it is awake. Putting innocent lives in danger is much more evil than using stealth or striking a sleeping opponent.

Like the wyvern, the soldiers are likely to be hostile when they awake, so why not destroy the hostility while you have the chance? This brings out a whole new side to the assassin: the good assassin. Absurd as this may seem, it is much more easy to conceive of this than a good vampire, ghost, or lich (see issue #162, "The Mind of the Vampire," for details). In *Unearthed Arcana* are rules for playing good drow and duergar, so if a player asks if he can play a good assassin as long as the PC doesn't get paid for the work and kills only evil creatures, give him a chance. You may even like it.

Matt Barrett
Port Angeles WA

I would like to respond to Mr. Toser's letter in issue #163. He cites three characters from modern fiction as examples of paladinhood. While all of these three—James West, James Bond, and Batman: The Dark Knight—do follow strict and unyielding codes of ethics, none are lawful good.

Even though West and Bond do work for their respective governments, neither is particularly responsive to the demands of his employer. It is the nature of covert agents like these to work around the law, and both are constantly getting into trouble for questionable activities. Each has also engaged in a personal vendetta at least once, a very unpaladin-like activity.

The Dark Knight is another story. I certainly agree that he has gone insane, but I do not feel that he was, ever lawful good. He always seeks justice, but he breaks every law he has to get it with no hesitation. He is a vigilante and was considered a terrible criminal at the beginning of his career.

All of these characters are good examples of dedication, an important characteristic of a paladin. None, however, quite fit the bill. Each quests for the greater good by bending the rules. I would consider them chaotic good—Batman currently being chaotic neutral. James West might possibly be neutral good. A paladin cannot say the end justifies the means.

Michael Kellam
Mesquite TX

I am writing in response to Ron "Winston" Dippel's letter in issue #165. First, I don't really think that this [catering to one character at the

expense of all others] is an "amateur" DM's mistake. I've played for over 12 years and ran my own campaigns for over 10 years. Second, a "crafty PC" is usually an excellent PC.

There is one player in my current group who will risk anything to get power. In my kind of campaign, big risks can reap big rewards, especially if you are lucky or smart enough to dodge the death factor. The majority of the players, though, seem to sit back and let things come to them. In order for them to be motivated, I give them quests that must be followed voluntarily by the PC. I would prefer my campaign to focus on inspiring emotions, such as the desire for revenge, companionship, love, and glory, but sometimes that just isn't feasible.

Some people can't motivate themselves, and they will probably never keep up with the crafty PCs. There are several things you could do to solve this problem. One possible scenario involves a PCs party's need for a magical item in order to finish a certain quest. Give the item to one of the least motivated characters. I hate to say it, but if this doesn't motivate him, maybe he shouldn't be role-playing. I had one player who always showed up for a game, but just sat and read his new magazines most of the time.

Another solution is to put more role-playing and puzzle-solving into the campaign. My players are at the point where they can spend an hour looking over what few notes they have and thinking about a puzzle before solving it.

A not-so-prominent problem is having too many players. Some players, in order to become crafty or interested, need more actual conversing time with the DM. If you have too many players, your time becomes too divided; some players feel left out and get bored. DMs, regardless of what some think, are only human.

Have logic behind everything your enemies do, but don't feel bad about cheating with statistics. If most of the things that happen in your campaign have logical steps and riddles, then anyone can solve them if they think about them. Don't make puzzles or who-done-it's too hard to solve for any but the best players.

In addition, don't hold back on "adjusting" hit points. In a major battle that is the crescendo of your current quest, write down the damage the PCs do to the enemies that they really hate, but don't let those numbers constrain you. Keep the monster alive until it seems to be the right time, when only a few PCs are conscious but most of the others aren't dead. All of this will build up more emotion, even though it might not seem like it would at first.

Don't penalize your crafty players for what they do, because then your good players' skills will drop to the level of your bad players. Try to give the lethargic players a slight majority of the magical items that are needed for the quest. If you bring a sister, brother, lover, etc., into the campaign, try to make the less-enthusiastic players the center of attention a little more often than the crafty players. If a good player is really that good, he should be able to weasel his way into the role-playing scenes between the PC and NPC. Put monsters in the game that can't be



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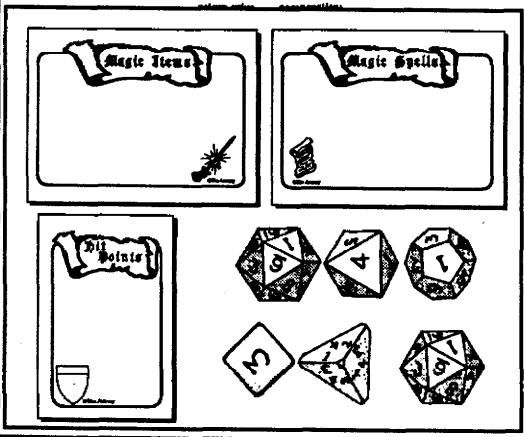
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Level:
Alignment: N N N N N N N N N N N N N N N N

Strength: / % Hit points: Max. obj.: Height obj.: Max. weight:
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handled by the crafty player, like a monster that can be hit only by magical weapons or spells that the slower PC alone has. Give the slower PCs a slight advantage in combat by giving them magical weapons or armor. Develop cities and actual role-playing, along with more riddles and personalities. Perhaps they shouldn't know who their enemy really is until they piece it together themselves.

I will admit, though, that my campaign went for nine years before I could have 50% puzzles and personality interaction with 50% action. It can be frustrating at first, but it is really worth the practice and can be the deciding factor between the DM's having fun or just being a robot to the players.

Personally, I feel that motivating players is one of the most unconquerable and painful problems a DM can face. Motivation is a personal thing that you can just barely push or encourage in a person. Sooner or later, depending on how often you play, you might have to stop inviting the person to your games or have to talk to him face to face about his motivation. After all, if someone doesn't really feel like playing with some enthusiasm or motivation, why waste your time? You don't play games so that you can be frustrated, or at least not the last time I checked.

Mark D. Krieter
St. Charles IL

In issue #162, a letter from James Massaro of Elizaville, N.Y., prompted an unusual response. He claimed that a PC in his party had become a vampire and was told, quite bluntly, that the character should be killed off or banned from play. This bothered me, and I would like to offer some alternative solutions.

In several horror stories, a vampire main character provides added drama. I call attention to the rejuvenated *Dark Shadows*. In its second or third episode, Barnabas Collins (a vampire in the leading role) was temporarily cured of his undead condition through medical science. I also remember a movie starring Christopher Lee as Dracula, in which the vampire hunter (Peter Cushing) was allotted enough time to purify himself after being bitten.

I concur that a fully powered, free-willed PC vampire throws the campaign out of balance, but no more than "magic weapons/armor +20" or permanent spell affects. Still, the character should be given a chance.

1. Is vampirism a disease? If so **cure disease** should be able to lessen the vampire PC's powers and remove a few of the vulnerabilities.

2. Is the bite of a vampire poisonous? Spells and potions that affect poison should also affect the bite.

3. Is it a curse, magical or otherwise? If so, **remove curse** or such spells could be used.

4. Even if no common spell might work, rare potions, spells, items, herbs, medicines, etc., can be sought out.

One could think of dozens of other cures, but you get the point. It might not be easy for an infected character to regain his humanity, but in game terms, it is a quest worthy of the best heroes. The idea behind fantasy role-playing is to put your characters in precarious situations and see how they fare.

Mr. Massaro was told to have a brigade of paladins and devas continuously hound the PC vampire. How absurd! No deity ever declared all-out war on real undead threats like Count Strahd. Why should the rules of supernatural nature be altered when the same condition manifests itself upon a PC?

Still, a Dungeon Master will have to deal with

a player who wants to keep his adventurer as an undead. These DMs should not spite this decision, but rather should point out that no one in their right mind would **want** to be a vampire in the first place! The restrictions far outweigh the perks. Simple items like holy symbols, scented plants, and wooden sticks can harm vampires. More common things like sunlight and running water are lethal! Vampires cannot enter any dwelling without being invited by the owner, which limits dungeon explorations a great deal. With an undead around, NPC morale checks would all fail (who would allow a vampire to sleep in his hotel?). The vampire would be put on every paladin and good cleric's hit list, and the diet (pardon the pun) sucks! I would also point out that magical weapons affect vampires like anyone else, and magical weapons are in no small supply in AD&D games.

Maybe vampires have no place in PC rosters, but let's be mature about getting rid of them.

John H. Goins
Milan TN

In response to Robert Vaughn's recent letter in "Forum," issue #163, I feel that the raising of undead should be viewed as undeniably and irrevocably evil, and should certainly not be undertaken for anything as frivolous as paladin training.

First, it depends on how you treat dead characters and NPCs in your campaign. If the carcass is simply the empty husk, no longer having any attachment to the person's soul or spirit, then it truly doesn't make a difference; creating undead would be little different than making a golem. However, if the paladin must first ask the person's soul for permission before raising them, this is clearly not the case. The soul must re-inhabit the rotting carcass when it is re-formed as a skeleton, vampire, or the like. Therefore, just get the dead person's permission before first raising them, as Mr. Vaughn suggests, as well as their gods permission (though most gods I've met are on too tight a schedule to answer every call). Your problem is solved. Indeed, if the two principal parties don't mind, who am I to question? But where does this stop? Could a high-level paladin be raised to fight a particularly vicious foe? The gardener, since no one has his green thumb? (Imagine: "Say, isn't that Sven? I thought he died." "Oh, he did, poor fellow, but no one can make coffee like he can!") And, since we did get their permission . . .

The point is, paladins don't need such elaborate measures to prepare themselves for battling the undead. The paladin rides into battle armed with faith in his god, his holy symbol acting as focus for his god's great and righteous power, and weapons to smite vile creatures back to whatever nether region they sprang from. That faith cannot be taught in the sterile environment of the temple, but only in battle can his true mettle be shown.

However, a paladin need not be completely thrown to the wind when it comes to fighting undead. He would most likely have seen undead before, though probably not fought them, when he acted as a squire and henchman to more experienced paladins as part of his early training. Most classes lack even this experience, yet warriors and wizards and rogues manage to fight and overcome undead and advance in levels.

The undead, when handled well, should be objects of sheer horror, not just for the dangers they pose to player characters but for the wretched souls locked into the ghastly prison of their own decaying flesh—flesh that they no

longer control. They are compelled toward evil through contact with the Negative Material plane or through the undead being that created them, such as a vampire. Viewed this way, a player character transformed into the undead becomes an object of horror and outrage and can lead to epic quests in order to free his soul from the prison of his own body.

Robert W. Heym
Murray Hill NJ

Regarding issue #164's editorial, "What you are in the dark," I was wondering what it means when one person is a wizard, dwarf fighter, ranger, bard, thief, and paladin. I came to the conclusion that I made all these different player characters when I was in different moods. Razzmarock, my chaotic-neutral wizard, came out after reading *Dragons of Spring Dawning*. Bane the dwarf came after reading AD&D comics. Sebnat, my ranger, appeared to me when I was out playing Swordtag at a friend's house. Valton the bard came from a book of short stories I have long since forgotten. Ragnon the thief, one of my favorites, hit me when I read about Tasselhoff Burrfoot. Finally, Pardue the paladin was an idea I got after I read about the Crusades. What do you think about my "mood" theory?

W. N. Knierim, Jr.
Dayton TN

Egraine is a magic-user and my favorite AD&D game character. In the past eight years, she has grown and matured in her skills, but her unpleasant manner remains the same. Inclined to act before she thinks through a situation, alert and wary, Egraine has been a challenge to play and remain true to her chaotic-neutral alignment.

My first DM suggested an outline of the character's past to help with beginning role-playing so from the first Egraine had a life outside of the game. In time, writing about this character and her struggles grew into what it is today—a five-volume series of books. Unfortunately, Egraine's life story can never be published. When my husband read some of it, he said, "She's you." (I hope not!)

I think that in writing, playing role-playing games, or acting, we draw upon something from ourselves when creating a characterization, whether or not it is a part we'd admit. I don't like to overanalyze. For me, writing, sketching, or playing any of my many characters is for the fun of it.

Although my sons, who encouraged my interest in role-playing games all these years, have all gone off to work and college, Egraine still lives. I have over 25 pounds of typewritten pages to prove it.

For your survey [in issue #164's editorial], I play a female magic-user or paladin half the time and a male fighter the rest. At 49, I know no one my age who shares this hobby.

I encourage other parents to take an interest in their children's RPG, but not take it over. In fact, why not begin with reading this issue of DRAGON Magazine?

Elizabeth Caetta
Barberton OH

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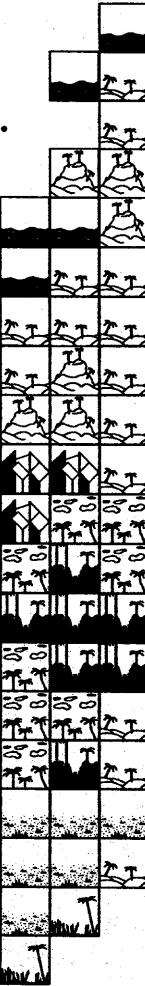
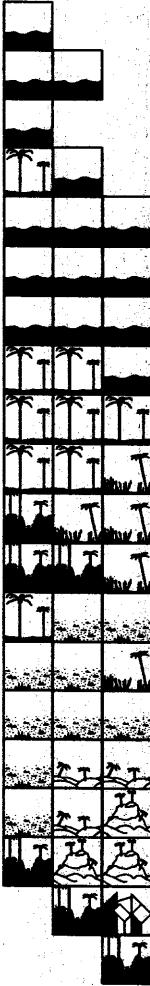
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"Keep up the great work! I'm on turn 42 and they keep getting better and better. I showed my last few turns to the guy I started with back in '89 - he really wishes he'd kept in the game. Can't wait for newsletter #3."

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TSR PREVIEWS

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by Jeff Grubb

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by Dale "Slade" Henson

In this adventure, the sequel to *WGS1 Five Shall Be One*, the five blades are finally together. Now they must be brought to a ceremony in an abandoned city on the other side of the mountains where they were forged. Along the way, a rival faction among the Ice Barbarians attempts to take the blades. It's up to your PCs to stop them.

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CONVENTION CALENDAR

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct. The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held;
2. Site and location;
3. Guests of honor (if applicable);
4. Special events offered;
5. Registration fees requirements; and,
6. Address(es) and telephone number(s) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

WARNING: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Our wide circulation ensures that over a quarter of a million readers worldwide see each issue. Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the last Monday of each month, two months prior to the on-sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the last Monday of October. Announcements for North American and Pacific conventions must be mailed to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, P.O. Box 111, Lake Geneva WI 53147, U.S.A. Announcements for Europe must be posted an additional month before the deadline to: Convention Calendar, DRAGON® Magazine, TSR Limited, 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge CB1 3LB, United Kingdom.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been canceled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at TSR, Inc., (414) 248-3625

(U.S.A.) Questions or changes concerning European conventions should be directed to TSR Limited, (0223) 212517 (U.K.).

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ANDCON '91, Sept. 12-15 O H

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn in Hudson, Ohio. Besides having many role-playing, board, and miniatures games, ANDCON is also the national play-by-mail convention. PBM companies from around the country will be holding and demos. Registration: \$15/weekend. Write to: ANDCON '91, P.O. Box 142, Kent OH 44240; or call Andon Games: (216) 673-2117.

GAMEFEST '91, Part 3

Sept. 13-15 IL

The Gamemaster's Guild of Waukegan, Ill. presents this convention at Friends' Hobby Shop. Events include miniatures games and fantasy and adventure role-playing games. Registration: \$6/day, or \$9/weekend. RPGA™ Network and HMGS members will receive discounts. Write to: Gamemasters Guild of Waukegan, c/o Friends' Hobby Shop, 1411 Washington, Waukegan IL 60085; or call (708) 336-0790.

TACTICON '91, Sept. 13-15 CO

This convention will be held at the Ramada Hotel of Denver/Boulder, Colo. Events include games of all kinds, RPGA™ tournaments, auctions, figure-painting contests, seminars and demos, and a live-action RPG. Registration: \$15/weekend preregistered. Write to: Denver Gamers' Assoc., P.O. Box 440058, Aurora CO 80044; or call: (303) 363-8967.

EMPEROR'S 21st BIRTHDAY, Sept. 14 IN

This convention will be held at the Century Center in South Bend, Ind. Events include an RPGA™ AD&D® tournament, Napoleonic miniatures games, and a dealer's area. Registration: \$7. Write to: Mark Schumaker, P.O. Box 252, Elkhart IN 46515; or call (219) 264-7019.

FRON 007, Sept. 14-15 *

This convention will be held from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M. at the Stadthalle in Frankfort Bergen Enkheim, Germany. Activities include role-playing games in German and English, SCA demos, live-action RPGs, a miniatures-painting contest, a PBM meet, and SPACE HULK* and BLOOD BOWL* tournaments. Registration: DM 3/day, or DM 5/weekend. GMs and those in costume are admitted free of charge. Lodging is available. Write to: "252," c/o Martin Kiehm, In der Roemerstadt 164, D-6000 Frankfurt am Main-50, GERMANY; or call (49) 69-574579.

WOLFCON '91, Sept. 20-22 MS

This convention will be held at the University Inn in Starkville, Miss. Our special guests are Michael Stackpole and Sandra Santara. Events include panels, FASA-sponsored tournaments, a live-action RPG, a costume contest, and a masquerade. Dealers are welcome. Registration:

\$18.50/weekend until Sept. 10; \$20 thereafter. Write to: Clayton Bain, Rt. 3, Box 178, Starkville MS 39759.

CAFE CASABLANCA, Sept. 27-29 CT

This live-action RPG convention will be held at the Days Hotel in West Haven, Conn. Players will take the roles of characters from movies like Casablanca and The Maltese Falcon. Registration: \$35 preregistered. Write to: Cruel Hoax Prod., c/o Lawrence Schick, 226 N. 2nd St., New Freedom PA; or call: (717) 235-2929.

DEFCON II, Sept. 27-29 NJ

This gaming/murder mystery weekend will be held in the Sheraton Inn in East Brunswick, NJ. The feature event is a live-action mystery in which players can interview suspects and search the scene of the crime for clues. Other events include AD&D®, MACHO WOMEN WITH GUNS*, CHILL*, ROLEMASTER*, and CYBER-PUNK* games, with costume and miniatures contests. Registration: \$6/day, \$15/two days, or \$20/weekend preregistered; \$10/day or \$25/weekend at the door. Write to: DEFCON II, 16 Grove St., Somerset NJ 08873; or call Pete at: (908) 249-0570 from 6-10 P.M. weekdays, or 10-10 weekends.

VALLEYCON XVI, Sept. 27-29 MN

This convention will be held at the Regency Inn in Moorhead, Minn. Guests include Margaret Weis and Erin McKee. Activities include an art show and auction, video rooms, RPGs, panels and workshops, a banquet, and a live game show. Registration: \$5/adults, \$4/13-17 yr. olds, \$3/3-12 yr. olds, preregistered. Children under 3 free. Dealers are welcome. Write to: VALLEY CON XVI, PO. Box 7202, Fargo ND 58108.

NOWSCON '91, Sept. 28-29 OH

This convention, sponsored by the Northern Ohio Wargaming Society (NOWS), will be held at the Brookpark National Guard Armory in Brookpark, Ohio. Events include an RPGA™ tournament, AD&D®, and American Civil War miniatures games. Other activities include a dealers' area and a game auction. Registration: \$15/weekend or \$10/day, both of which include a one-year membership in the NOWS. Event fees are included. Write to: NOWSCON '91, P.O. Box 29116, Parma OH 44129.

NOVACON, Oct. 4-6 TX

This gaming convention will be held at the Memorial Student Center on the campus of Texas A&M University in College Station, Tex. Events include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS*, TRAVELLER*, CYBERPUNK*, TWILIGHT: 2000*, GURPS*, AXIS & ALLIES*, CAR WARS*, STAR FLEET BATTLES*, DIPLOMACY*, TITAN*, TALISMAN*, CIVILIZATION*, and microarmor games. Other activities include 24-hour Japanimation and open gaming. Registration: \$8/weekend. Write to: MSC NOVA, Box J-1, College Station TX 77844-9081; or call: (409) 845-1515.

RUDICON 7, Oct. 4-6 NY

This convention will be held on the campus of the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in Rochester, N.Y., and is sponsored by RWAG and the RIT student government. Events include RPG and war-gaming tournaments, miniatures-painting and art contests, a large dealers' room, historical miniatures games, and a con party complete with a costume contest. Registration: \$5/weekend. Dealers are welcome. Write to: RUDICON 7, c/o Student Gov't., 1 Lomb Memorial Dr., Rochester NY 14623.

* indicates an Australian convention.
** indicates a Canadian convention.
*** indicates a European convention.

CON*CEPT '91, Oct. 5-6

This convention will be held at the Nouvel Hotel in Montreal, Quebec. Guests include Diane Duane and Peter Morwood. Activities include panels, exhibits, a dealers' room, a masquerade, an art show, an auction, and gaming. Registration: \$20 before Sept. 21; \$23 at the door. Write to: CON*CEPT '91, P.O. Box 405, Station "H," Montreal, Quebec, CANADA H3G 2L1; or call (days): (514) 453-9455.

SKELETON '91, Oct. 5-7

This convention will be held at the Oatley Public School in Oatley, Sydney, Australia. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, CYBERPUNK®, and TRAVELLER® games. Prizes will be awarded, and demo games will be run throughout the weekend. Other activities include a dinner and social. Registration: \$12 (Australian) plus \$4 to \$6 per event. Write to: SKELETON '91, 79 Thurlgona Rd., Engadine NSW 2233, AUSTRALIA; or call Russell: (02) 579-6412.

TOLEDO GAMING CONVENTION IX**Oct. 5-6**

This convention will be held at the University of Toledo, Scott Park campus, Ohio. Over 150 role-playing, strategy, tactical, and miniatures games will be run. Other activities include an auction, demos, painting contests, nonstop movies, open gaming, and a dealers' area. Send an SASE to: Toledo Gaming Convention IX, 2115 N. Reynolds, Toledo OH 43615; or call Larry at: (419) 536-0592.

NECRONOMICON, Oct. 11-13

This convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Airport in Tampa, FL. Guests include Piers Anthony, Andre Norton, Richard Lee Byers, and Joseph Green. Activities include a banquet, a fan cabaret, panels, an art show and auction, a dealers' room, dances, and an auction to benefit Wildlife Rescue. Registration: \$15 until Sept. 15; \$20 or \$8/day thereafter. Write to: NECRONOMICON '91, P.O. Box 2076, Riverview FL 33569.

QUAD CON '91, Oct. 11-13

This convention, held by the Riverbend Gamers' Assoc., will be held at the Palmer Auditorium, in Davenport, Iowa. Guests include Sam Lewis. Events include BATTLETECH®, SHADOWRUN®, CHAMPIONS®, TOP SECRET®, WARHAMMER 40,000®, AD&D®, RENEGADE LEGION®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, Rifts®, and historical games, with a silent auction of game materials, a miniature-painting competition, a dealers' room, and food. Registration: \$4/day or \$7/weekend before preregistered; \$5/day or \$10/weekend at the door. Game fees range from \$2 to \$4. Send large SASE to: The Game Emporium, 3213 23rd Ave., Moline IL 61265; or call: (309) 762-5577. No collect calls, please.

TITANCON '91, Oct. 11-13

Sponsored by the Historical Simulation Society, this TITAN® game convention will be held at Old Caball Hall, on the campus of the University of Virginia in Charlotte, Va. Our Game Point Average system insures continuous TITAN® play for all to see, and is used to determine Team Champions and seeding of individuals for the Individual Championships games on Sunday. Trophies will be awarded. Registration: \$5 until Oct. 4; \$10 at the door. Write (and make checks payable) to: Brian Bouton, 5 S. Dooley Ave., Richmond VA 23221; or call: (804) 358-5517.

WARP II, Oct. 11-13

Sponsored by the War and Role-Playing Games ASSOC., this convention will be held at the South-

west Airport Hotel in Tulsa, Okla. Events include an AD&D® 2nd Ed. tournament, with RAVENLOFT™, BATTLETECH®, CHAMPIONS®, SHADOWRUN®, and AXIS & ALLIES® games, as well as a dealers' room, combat demos, and a movie room. Registration: \$8/weekend in advance, \$12/weekend at the door. Write to: WARP, 5103 S. Sheridan, Tulsa OK 74145; or call: (918) 743-1025.

BORDERCON, Oct. 12-13**OH**

This convention will be held at the Salem, N.H. Econolodge between Boston, Mass. and Concord, N.H. Events will include TITAN®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, and TWILIGHT: 2000® games, with an APPA Baseball tournament. Other games and a dealers' room are also featured. Registration: \$15/weekend preregistered, or \$15 for Saturday and \$10 for Sunday at the door, plus event fees. Write to: Denice Keller, c/o Econolodge, 1 Keewayden Dr., Salem NH 03079.

COGACON '91, Oct. 12-13**OH**

This convention will be held at the Masonic Temple in downtown Columbus, Ohio. Events include board, miniatures, and role-playing games, including RPGA™ Network events. Registration: \$5/day; no preregistrations, please. Write to: Terry Hollern, 1660 Evinrude Ave., Columbus OH 43229; or call: (614) 882-5241.

P.E.W. KHANU I, Oct. 12-13**PA**

This convention, organized especially for gamers who enjoy political, economic, miniatures, and board games, is being held at the New Villa Inn in New Cumberland, Pa. Other activities include a dealers' area and our guest of honor, Craig Taylor. Registration: Fees vary from \$5 to \$11, depending on date and length of registration. Write to: M. Foner's Games Only Emporium, 200 3rd St., New Cumberland PA 17070; or call: (717) 774-6676.

BORDERCON '91, Oct. 18-20**MO**

Cohosted by the Role-Players Guild of Kansas City and the Heart of America Historical Miniatures Gaming Society, this convention will be held at the Rodeway Inn in downtown Kansas City, Mo. Events include RPGA™ sessions, with AD&D®, PARANOIA®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, TORG®, SHADOWRUN®, TALISMAN®, WARHAMMER®, AXIS & ALLIES®, BATTLETECH®, MARVEL SUPER HEROES™, and CHAMPIONS® games. Guests include Harold Johnson and Tim Beach of TSR, Inc. Other activities include a dealers' area, an auction, and a miniatures contest. Registration: \$10 before Sept. 20; \$13 thereafter. Send an SASE to: BORDERCON '91, P.O. Box 7457, Kansas City MO 64116-0157; or call: (816) 455-5020.

CUBECON '91, Oct. 19**PA**

Sponsored by the BCCG Gaming Guild and the Circle of Swords, this convention will be held at Butler Community College in Butler, Pa. Activities include RPGA™ events, with board, miniatures, and role-playing games, as well as a dealers' area and a miniatures-painting contest. Registration: \$5 until Sept. 5; \$7 thereafter. Send an SASE to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler PA 16003; or call Dave at: (412) 283-1159.

CONTRARY '91, Oct. 24-26**MA**

This convention will be held at the Quality Inn & Conference Center in Chicopee, Mass. Events include several first-run RPGA™ events, with AD&D®, GURPS®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, SHADOWRUN®, TORG®, and RUNEQUEST® games. Other activities include a Halloween costume party, a painting contest, and an auction. Regis-

tration: \$15 in advance, or \$20 at the door.

Write to: CONTRARY '91, 626 N. Main St., East Longmeadow MA 01036; or call: (413) 731-7237.

CON OF THE LIVING DEAD '91**TN**

Sponsored by World of Games and Hobbies, this convention will be held in Memphis, Tenn. The site is yet to be determined. Events include CALL OF CTHULHU®, VAMPIRE®, GHOST-BUSTERS®, RAVENLOFT™, GURPS HORROR®, CHILL®, and murder-mystery games. Other activities include a costume contest, a miniatures competition, and trick-or-treating. For site location and registration information, write to: C.O.D., c/o World of Games and Hobbies, 2796 S. Perkins, Memphis TN 38118; or call: (901) 365-2080.

GAECON '91, Oct. 26-28

This convention will be held at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Kilmainham, Dublin 8, Ireland. Events include AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, PARANOIA®, WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY®, and MEGATRAVELLER® games, plus trade stands and special guests. Registration: £3/day, or £8/weekend. Write to: Irish Games Assoc., c/o 49 Russell Ave., Clonliffe Rd., Drumcondra, Dublin 3, IRELAND.

KETTERING GAME CONVENTION V**OH**

This convention will be held at the Charles I. Lathrem Senior Center in Kettering, Ohio. Events include FRP, board, miniatures, computer, and RPGA™ games. A special feature is a Masters of Gaming tournament based on "Double Exposure," by Piers Anthony. Write to: Bob Van Gruenigen, 804 Willowdale Ave., Kettering OH 45429; or call: (513) 298-3224.

NOVAG VI, Oct. 26-27**VA**

This gaming convention will be held at the Elks' Lodge in Fairfax, Va. Events include historical miniatures, board, microarmor, and role-playing games. Other features include food vendors, dealers, and 24-hour gaming. Registration: \$8/weekend or \$5/day. Write to: NOVAG VI, c/o Wargames Hobby, 101 E. Holly Ave., Suite 5, Sterling VA 22170; or call: (703) 450-6738 after 1 P.M. EST. Ask about lodging information.

STAR CON '91, Oct. 26-27**WI**

This SF&F/gaming convention will be held at Americano's Centre in Menasha, Wis. Write to: STAR CON '91, 1112 N. Lake St., Neenah WI 54956.

WIZARDS' GATHERING II, Oct. 26**MA**

Sponsored by the Southeast Mass. Adventure Gamers' Society, this convention will be held at the Days Inn in Fall River, Mass. Events include AD&D®, RAVENLOFT™, SPELLJAMMER™, D&D®, MERP®, TORG®, STAR FRONTIERS®, BATTLETECH®, SHADOWRUN®, and AFTER-MATH® games. Other activities include contests for modules, art, and miniatures painting. Registration: \$5 until Oct. 12; \$7 thereafter, plus game fees. Cheaper "visitor" rates are available. Write to: WIZARDS GATHERING, P.O. Box 6030, South Station, Fall River MA 02724.

GENERICON '91, Nov. 1-3**MN**

This convention will be held at the Coffman Memorial Union on the University of Minnesota campus in Minneapolis. Activities include a costume contest, a post-Halloween dance, a miniatures competition, war and role-playing games and tournaments, an art show and auction, a dealers' room, panels, and the return of the Star Trek room. Registration: \$10 preregistration.

Cafeteria Workers Instigate Food Fight



"They were armed to the teeth," one surprised customer said. "You should have seen it. Carrots, tomatoes, broccoli everywhere." It seems cafeteria workers all over town have joined **The Great American Food Fight Against Cancer**. Now they're recommending foods that may help reduce cancer risk. The list includes foods high in vitamins A and C, high in fiber and low in fat.

"I love to see people eat healthy," as one server put it. "When I throw a big helping of steamed vegetables on someone's plate, I feel real good inside."

Similar sentiments were echoed by other workers. "When a kid reaches for low-fat milk or yogurt, or grabs an apple for dessert, well, it's just beautiful," said one emotional server.

Experts recommend that people join The Great American Food Fight Against Cancer whether dining out or at home.

The American Cancer Society, sponsor of the Food Fight, has more information. Call **1-800-ACS-2345**.

And, be on the lookout for Community Crusade volunteers armed with shopping lists. Ready? Aim. Chew!



Public Service Message

tered, and \$15 at the door. Make all checks payable to U of MN Gaming Society. Write to: GENERICON '91, c/o David Rust, 1826 Alameda St., Roseville MN 55113; or call: (612) 340-0139.

VEGASCON '91, Nov. 1-3

This SF/gaming/comic-book convention will be held at the Palace Station hotel/casino in Las Vegas, NV. Events include AD&D®, GURPS®, CHAMPIONS®, CAR WARS® and other board and role-playing games. Other activities include open gaming, panels and seminars, guests, movies, and a large dealers' area. Registration: \$20 preregistered, \$25 at the door. Make checks or M.O.s payable to VEGASCON. Write to: VEGASCON, 4210 Chatham Cir. #1, Las Vegas NV 89119-6869; or call: (702) 733-7470.

ROCK-CON XIX, Nov. 2-3

This convention will be held at Rockford Lutheran High School in Rockford, Ill. Guests include Jim Ward, Tom Wham, and John Olson. Registration: \$5 for one or both days, with no game fees. Write to: ROCK-CON XIX, 14225 Hansberry Rd., Rockton IL 61072.

URICON '91, Nov. 2

The University of Rhode Island Gaming Club announces this convention will be held at the Memorial Union in the U. of R.I. campus in Kingston, R.I. Events include D&D®, SHADOWRUN®, and STAR FLEET BATTLES® games. Registration: \$4 general admission, \$3 for URI students before Oct. 19; or \$5 and \$4 thereafter. Write to: Mark Oliver, 87A Ninigret Rd., Narragansett RI 02882.

A.U.G. CON III, Nov. 8-10

A.U. Gamers present this convention, to be held at the Sheraton Tara Hotel in Parsippany, N.J. Events include RPGATM Network events, a charity game, and board games. Other activities include a costume contest, a miniatures-painting contest, and a dealers' room. Prizes will be awarded to the best players and GMs. Registration: \$7/day or \$18/weekend before Oct. 20; \$8/day or \$20/weekend thereafter, and \$10/day at the door. Write to: A.U. Gamers, P.O. Box 218, Flanders NJ 07836.

GAME FAIR XIV, Nov. 8-10

Sponsored by the Illinois Central College Game club, this convention will be held at ITOO Hall in Peoria, Ill. Events include AD&D®, BATTLETECH®, AXIS & ALLIES®, CHAMPIONS®, CAR WARS®, WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY®, WWII naval miniatures, and SQUAD LEADER® games. Other activities include open gaming, a dealers' area, an auction, and painting contests. Registration: \$2/day, or \$3/weekend. Write to: GAME FAIR XIV, P.O. Box 308, Groveland IL 61535; or call: (309) 387-6233 evenings.

SCI CON 13, Nov. 8-10

This SF/gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Virginia Beach, Va. Guests include Lois McMaster Bujold and Vincent DiFate. Events include panels, readings, videos, a costume contest, an art show, a hospitality suite, and gaming. Registration: \$20 until Oct. 1; \$25 at the door. Dealers are welcome. Send an SASE to: SCI CON 13, P.O. Box 9434, Hampton VA 23670.

IMPACT 1.3, Nov. 9

This gaming convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Central in Omaha, Nebr. Events include tabletop and role-playing games. Registration: \$5. Write to: IMPACT, P.O. Box 4486, Omaha NE 68104.

LAGACON 12, Nov. 9

This convention will be held at Kasper's Ark, north of Lebanon, Pa. Events include AD&D®, ASL*, and BATTLETECH* tournaments, with NUKE WAR®, DAYS OF DECISION®, TALISMAN®, RED EMPIRE®, and other introductory games. Vendors will be present. Ask about group discounts. Write to: Lebanon Area Gamers' Assoc., 806 Cumberland St., Lebanon PA 17042; or call: (717) 274-8706 from 5-9 P.M. week nights and 9-9 on Saturdays.

WATCON '91, Nov. 9-10

Sponsored by WATSFIC, this convention will be held at the University of Waterloo campus in Waterloo, Ontario. Events include AD&D®, CHAMPIONS®, and AFTERMATH® games, plus board and miniatures events. Other activities include panels, seminars, and all types of gaming and prizes. Registration: \$10/day (Canadian) or \$16/weekend preregistered, and \$15/day or \$20/weekend at the door. Write to: WATSFIC, c/o Room 215 (Clubs' Room), Campus Centre, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, CANADA, N2L 3G1; or call Ronald at: (519) 884-3842.

COWBOY CON II, Nov. 16-17

This convention will be held at the OSU Student Union in Stillwater, Okla. Events include AXIS & ALLIES®, PANZER LEADER®, STAR FLEET BATTLES®, AD&D®, STAR TREK®, CHAMPIONS®, and WARHAMMER® games. Other activities include a movie room and a dealers' room. Registration: \$2/day or \$5/weekend preregistered; \$3/day or \$6/weekend at the door. Write to: Con Chairman, c/o Cowboy Campaigners Club, 040 Student Union, Box 110, Stillwater OK 74978; or call Wes at: (405) 372-9448.

U-CON, Nov. 15-17

This convention will be held at Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor, Mich. Events include a wide variety of historical miniatures and strategic games. Registration: \$5/day or \$7/weekend; at-the-door prices slightly higher. Write to: U-CON, PO. Box 4491, Ann Arbor MI 48106-4491.

PENTAGON VII, Nov. 16-17

Sponsored by the Northeastern Indiana Gamers' Assoc., this convention will be held at the Grand Wayne Center in downtown Fort Wayne, Ind. Events include an RPGATM AD&D® tournament, the NIGA Spotlight tournament, historical miniatures games, painting and costume contests, door prizes, and a flea market. Registration: \$5/day or \$8/weekend preregistered; or \$6/day or \$10/weekend at the door. Write to: PENTACON, P.O. Box 11176, Fort Wayne IN 46856; or call Steve at: (219) 356-4209.

NUCON '91, Nov. 22-24

Sponsored by NUGS, this convention will be held at the University of Newcastle, Newcastle, NSW, Australia. Events include AD&D®, CALL OF CTHULHU®, CYBERPUNK®, SPACE: 1889®, and TOON® games. Registration: \$3 (Australian) per session, for up to eight sessions. Write to: NUGS, 2/16 Upfold St., Mayfield, NSW 2304, AUSTRALIA; or call Rodney at: (049) 633230 or Matthew at: (049) 676610.

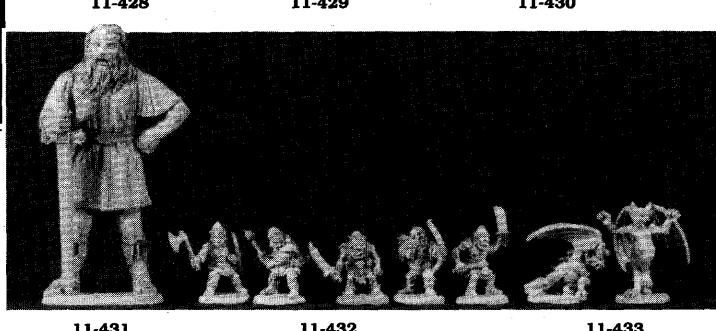
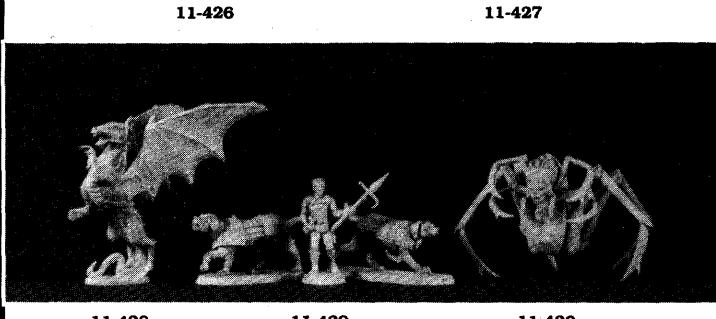
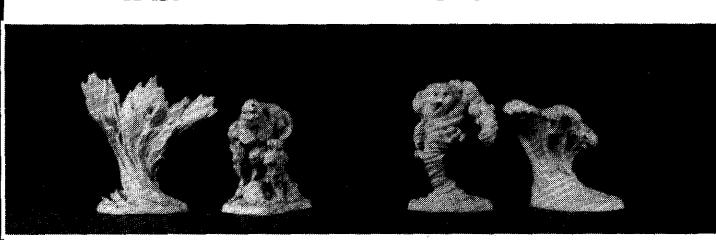
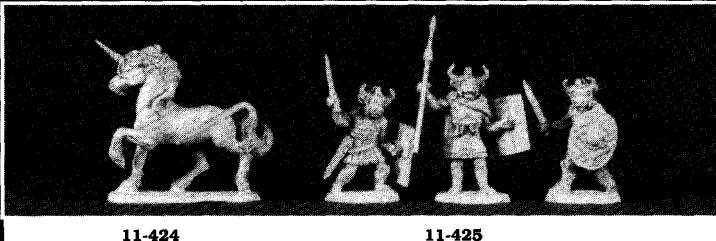
How effective was your convention listing? If you are a convention organizer, please write to the editors and let us know if our "Convention Calendar" served your needs. Your comments are always welcome.

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Role of Books

Continued from page 88

STREET MAGIC

Michael Reaves

Tor 0-312-85125-1 \$18.95

In addition to his credits as a novelist, Michael Reaves has done a good deal of writing for film and television. That may explain why *Street Magic* feels more like a screenplay than a novel: It has enough plot and action for a full-length movie, but its characters are waiting for actors to bring their roles to life.

In typical cinematic fashion, the cast comes in pairs. Danny Thayer and his newfound friend Robin are the teenagers driving the plot. He's a runaway fleeing his abusive father; she's an exile from Faerie who insists that only Danny can open the way back. Freelance detective Scott Russell is hired to track Danny down, and he is joined in the hunt by tabloid journalist Liz Gallegher. Meanwhile, Douglas Craig and Alice Kopfman are watching from the sidelines, looking for evidence of Faerie's existence in the corridors of Alice's comfortable San Francisco bookstore.

But by splitting his tale three ways, Reaves forces the relationships between the couples to evolve too fast. No sooner does Danny discover Robin's identity than he's roped into the scheme to reopen the passage to Faerie (Reaves calls it a "gall-

trap"). No sooner do Scott and Liz meet than they spontaneously join forces and fall in lust. And Douglas Craig's encounter with Alice not only produces a similar mutual attraction, but inspires Craig to come out of an alcoholic funk. Only in Danny's case does the chemistry fail to click at once, and that's because Reaves needs to delay it so the story won't climax too quickly.

What's really frustrating about this is that all six players are thoroughly likeable; Reaves may not give them enough to do, but he tells enough about them to make them sympathetic. Most of the novel, in fact, is description, and most of the description is well done. The San Francisco setting has the right blend of fog and bustle, the portrayal of teenage street life is properly matter-of-fact and horrifying, and the magic has the right degree of inner and outer pyrotechnics. As an exercise in visual imagery, *Street Magic* is a striking success.

As a novel, though, it goes by entirely too fast. In part, that's because it's a short book, with under 250 pages of larger-than-average type. But the real difficulty is that there just isn't enough substance underneath the dazzling scenery, and that makes the tale incomplete at best, rather like a gaming scenario awaiting a band of player characters. Would-be module writers might well study the book's use of

technique, but those looking for a compelling story are better off elsewhere.

EXTREME PARANOIA: NOBODY KNOWS THE TROUBLE I'VE SHOT

Ken Rolston

West End Games 0-87431-162-2 \$4.95

Transcript of a conversation smuggled out of Alpha Complex:

TROUBLESHOOTER, WHY HAVEN'T YOU COMPLETED YOUR MISSION?

"This is a very dangerous mission, Friend Computer, requiring tact and diplomacy for its success."

TACT? DIPLOMACY? WHAT'S WRONG WITH CONCENTRATED LASER FIRE?

"Well, as you know, I'm evaluating a Mission Report prepared by Troubleshoter Ken Rolston."

SO?

"Troubleshooter Rolston and I both work under High Programmer Roger E. Moore, and if I say something my fellow Troubleshoter doesn't like, he may decide I'm a Commie Mutant Traitor and direct concentrated laser fire at me."

ARE YOU IMPLYING THAT TROUBLESHOOTER ROLSTON'S MISSION REPORT, CONCERNING THE RECENT HEROIC ACTIONS OF CITIZEN HOMER-R-ICK AND HIS MISSION TEAM AGAINST A WHOLE ARMY OF COMMIE MUTANT TRAITORS, TREASONOUS ROBOTS, EVIL HIGH PROGRAMMERS, AND SO FORTH, IS NOT BRILLIANTLY WRITTEN AND ACCURATE



New from Bard Games!

The **Talislanta Worldbook** is the atlas of Archaeus — the strange and exotic world which serves as the setting for the **Talislanta** game. The Worldbook features fully-revised material from the *Chronicles of Talislanta* and the *Cyclopedia Talislanta*, plus new continental, regional, and city maps. Also included: all-new material on the Unknown Lands — Draknar, the Lost Continent, the Flying Island of Alcedon, the Midnight Realm, Altarus, and Celadon!

Suitable for use with any Fantasy Role Playing game.
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IN EVERY DETAIL?

"Of course not. It is accurate in all particulars and authentically portrays life within the world of Alpha Complex. Troubleshooter Rolston is clearly an expert in our technology, customs, and report preparation."

INDEED. WHY SHOULD TROUBLESHOOTER ROLSTON OBJECT TO SUCH AN ANALYSIS OF HIS MISSION REPORT?

"Well, this Mission Report is also being distributed to certain Outside audiences as a recruiting tool, to entice them to visit Alpha Complex and thus come under Your all-encompassing protection."

A LAUDABLE GOAL. DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH IT, CITIZEN?

"Certainly not. But those readers have been told that the Mission Report is a novel—that is, a continuing narrative of events unfolding in an organized fashion, most or all of which are connected in a logical sequence."

I SEE. IS THAT NOT IN FACT THE CASE?

"Ideally, Friend Computer, Troubleshooter missions should indeed proceed in such a fashion. In reality, however, such unpredictable events as equipment malfunction, intervention by Commie Mutant Traitors and members of secret societies, and difficulties in obtaining necessary clearances or mission equipment may result in massive deviations from the planned mission schedule. As you know, this was especially true of the mission Troubleshooter Rolston describes."

IN OTHER WORDS, TROUBLESHOOTER ROLSTON'S REPORT IS FILLED WITH EXTRANEOUS DETAILS, DESCRIBES EVENTS NOT CHARACTERISTIC OF THE SMOOTH OPERATION OF ALPHA COMPLEX, AND THEREFORE WILL NOT ENTERTAIN ITS INTENDED AUDIENCE OF PROSPECTIVE CITIZENS?

"Not exactly."

I SEE. THEN TROUBLESHOOTER ROLSTON IS OBVIOUSLY A COMMIE MUTANT TRAITOR ATTEMPTING TO DIMINISH MY PROTECTIVE INFLUENCE OVER POTENTIAL LOYAL CITIZENS. PLEASE EXECUTE HIM AT ONCE.

"I'd really rather not do that. The somewhat disjointed nature of the Mission Report really isn't Troubleshooter Rolston's fault; rather, it's a function of his desire to accurately describe Alpha Complex and the Troubleshooter lifestyle. Further, many names, places, and objects in Alpha Complex have amusing connotations among Outside readers, and Outside audiences are very susceptible to these puns."

AS YOU SAY. THEN YOU WILL RECOMMEND THAT TROUBLESHOOTER ROLSTON'S REPORT BE MADE REQUIRED READING FOR ALL PROSPECTIVE CITIZENS OF ALPHA COMPLEX.

"Begging The Computer's pardon, but until the prospective citizens actually become Citizens, we can't require them to do anything."

A GOOD POINT. HAVE YOU A SUGGESTION?

"If we leak this conversation to High Programmer Moore, he can have it distributed to a great many prospective citizens who may then be motivated to obtain

Troubleshooter Rolston's report."

VERY GOOD, TROUBLESHOOTER. CONSIDER IT YOUR NEXT MISSION.

Recurring roles

It's a good season for mysteries, it seems; no less than three are lurking on the shelves this time around. Simon Green's Hawk and Fisher are back in *The God Killer* (Ace, \$3.95), and this third entry in Green's series of sword-and-sorcery detective yarns involves an intriguing premise. As is becoming usual for Green, the puzzle is less distinctive than the atmosphere, but there's reliable entertainment here.

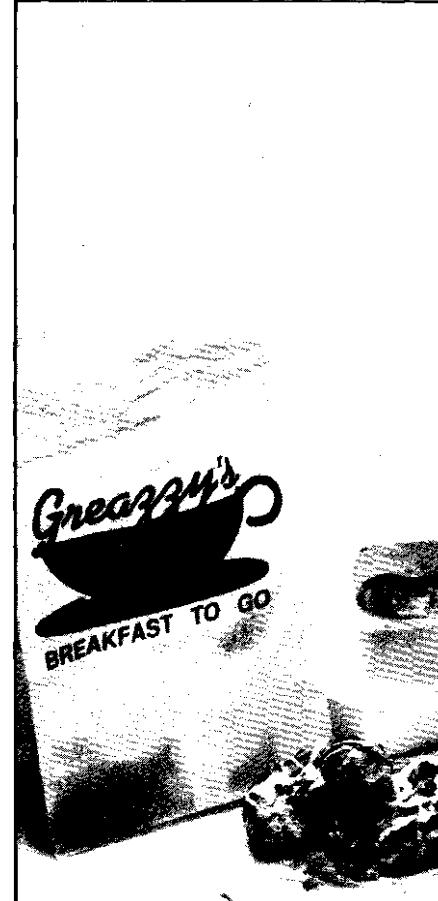
P. N. Elrod builds far trickier whodunits, and the fifth Jack Fleming vampire adventure, *Fire in the Hood* (Ace, \$3.95) is no exception. This time, too, Jack is forced to confront his powers head-on, in one of the sharpest portrayals of vampiric ethics I've seen. Elrod's storytelling has grown stronger with each of these books, and readers should keep a sharp eye out for her further works, in this series or otherwise.

Mixed marks go to Diane Duane and Peter Morwood for *Mindblast* (Avon, \$3.95), first in a series about partnered police officers whose beat is the solar system. As usual, their dialogue and plotting is crisp and clever, but they're stretched over a background too thin to support them. That's a rarity from this team; with luck, future volumes will fill in the gaps.

Speaking of gaps, followers of Diana Paxson's Westria cycle should take note: *The Mistress of the Jewels* (Tor, \$4.99) brings the first two books in the series, long out of print, together in a new single-volume edition. As the newer tales chronicle the recovery of the lost elemental jewels of Paxson's mythical realm, so does this double novel relate their earlier sundering.

Jennifer Roberson, meanwhile, brings the tales of Tiger and Del to a rousing conclusion in *Sword-Breaker* (DAW, \$4.99). Duels are in plenty here, both physical and magical, but the resolutions are not always what one might expect, and the final scene rings a couple of sly twists on traditional storybook endings. More sword and sorcery should achieve this combination of adventure and intimacy.

The Shield of Time (Tor, \$4.99) picks up, to some extent, where Poul Anderson left off in *The Year of the Ransom* some time back. This time, veteran Time Patrol agent Manse Everard takes center stage, with young recruit Wanda Tamberly from the earlier book emerging as a romantic interest. But there's literally no time for the relationship to develop, as the Patrol's enemies have managed to erase its very existence from most of the future. Only sharp detective work and daring action will restore what should be, and Anderson is at his best when he's recreating real and alternate pasts. Time-travel fans will want to be sure to catch this one.



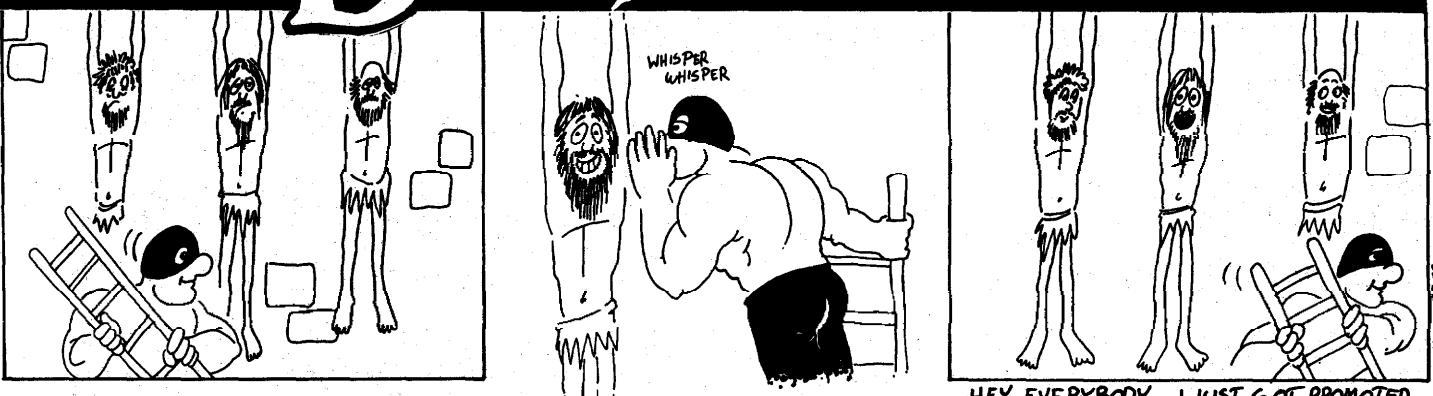
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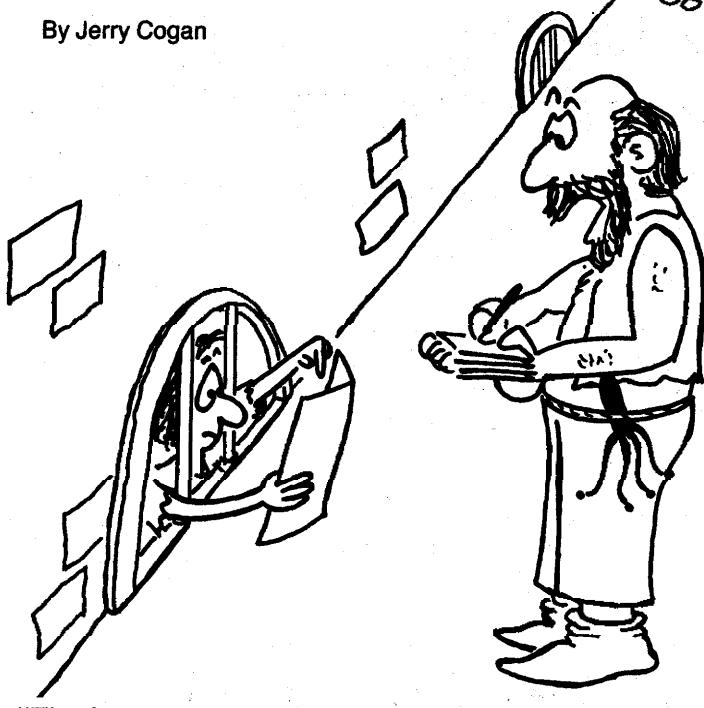


By James Charette



"Well, yes, I did say for better or worse,
but I hardly think that covers
irreversible transfiguring spells."

By Jerry Cogan



"That's a lukewarm porridge made from moldy grain
and dirty water, served on a bed of maggots in
a rusty pot."

Gamara

I HAVE NO IDEA HOW I'M GOING
TO CONVINCE THE BISHOP THAT
I'M NOT DATING A VAMPIRE...

- UH OH.

HOW CAN I SPEAK OF LOVE
WHEN I AM ONLY A BLOOD-
DRINKING EVIL-THING AND
YOU ARE AN UPSTANDING
PILLAR OF THE COMMUNITY?

PERSEPHONE. YOU—
YOU CAN'T FLOAT THERE.
YOU'RE IN HALLOWED
AIRSPACE.

BUT I WAS HOPING
YOU'D LET ME MOVE
IN NEXT DOOR...
THERE'S THAT
LOVELY PLOT
OVER BY THE
WOODS...

PERSEY, COULD WE PLEASE POSTPONE
OUR WHIRLWIND ROMANCE UNTIL
AFTER I'M BURNED AT THE
STAKE?

YOU'D GO TO
THE STAKE!?!?
FOR ME?!!

NO, NOW,
LET'S NOT

I'M NOT IN—

KNOCK
KNOCK

HE LOVES ME!!
HE LOVES ME!!

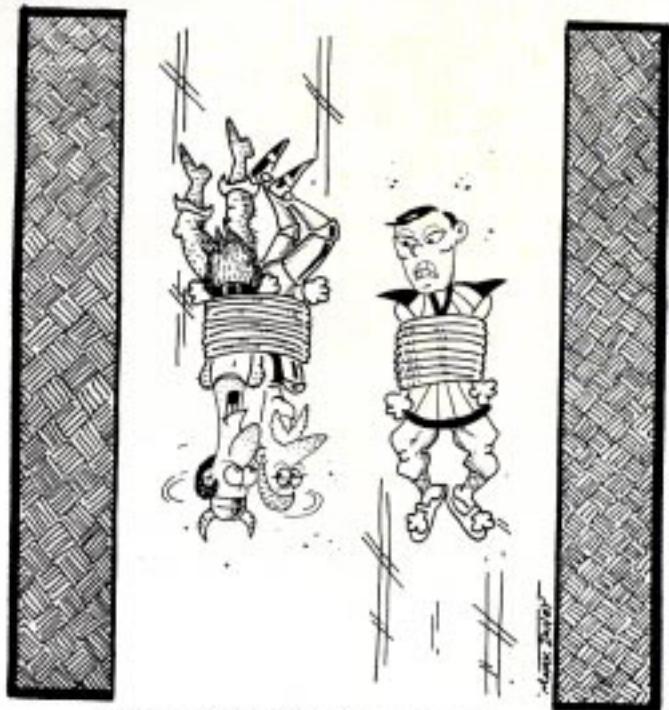
TURNING
THOSE PESKY
LINEDAD TONIGHT,
EH, JOE?

O! YE DWELLERS
IN THE NIGHT! HEAR
MY CRY OF JOY!
SHE'S BLUFFING, JOE. I KNOW WHEN
YOU'VE GOT THEM ON THE RUN.

By Jeff Haas



"And another point to remember
when conversing with dragons...."



"Hey! This really is a bottomless pit!"

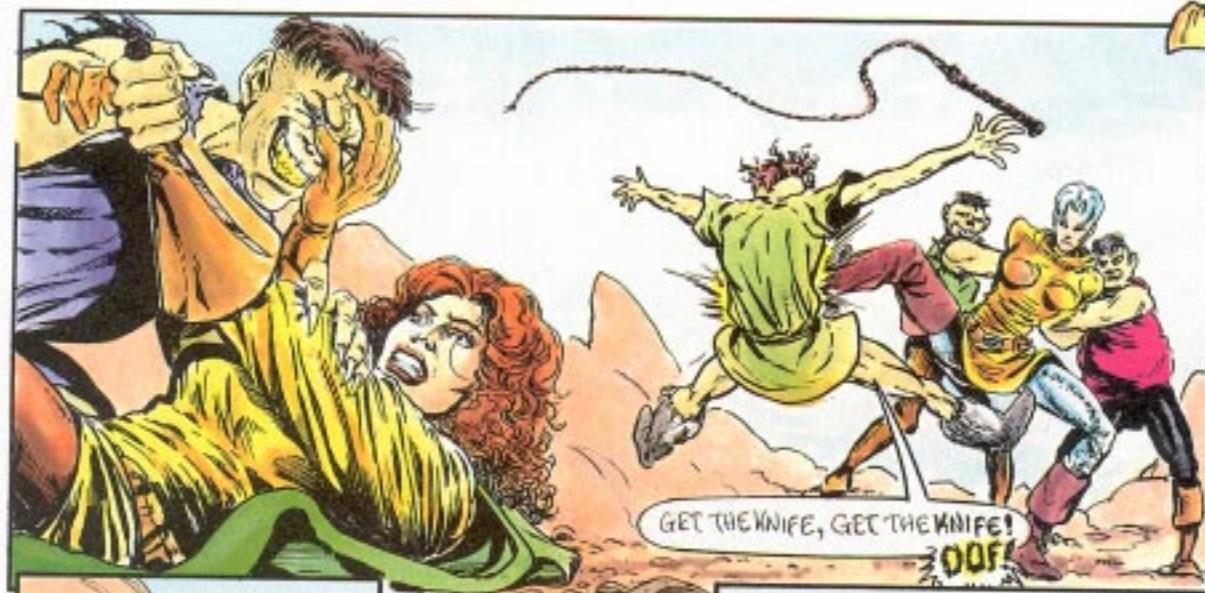
By Mark Doney



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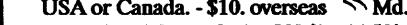
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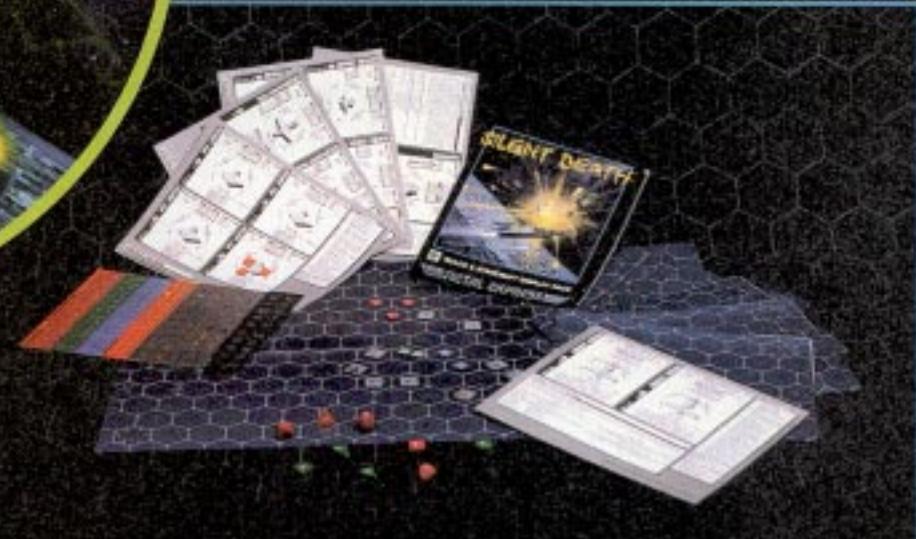
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Through the LOOKING Glass

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Photography by Mike Bethke



Ventauran officers and legionnaires (Denzien)

An update on the Congressional anti-lead bill

Let's start this month's column with the answer to one of the most-asked questions of the last year: "What happened to the anti-lead bill?" For those of you tuning in late, a bill was introduced to Congress last fall to protect the environment. One part of this bill was worded in such a way that all lead miniatures and other lead hobby goods would be taken off the market within a year of the bill's passage. Gaming as we know it would change radically. Companies would have to use alternate figure materials and would be forced to raise their prices to recover their losses. Many of the larger figures would cease to exist, and detail on miniatures would decrease, since plastic, for example, is not known to hold sharp detail. At the time, we encouraged you to write your senators and representatives to express your concern and request that this wording be retracted from the bill, or an amendment

exempting hobby lead figures be added. Many of you sent letters, and this, combined with lobbying by some miniature companies, got this bill sent to committee, where it sat.

End of story, right? Wrong! My sources tell me that the bill is alive in the committee and might return to haunt us in the fall session. Whether it makes it or not depends on whether we continue to keep the pressure on by sending polite letters to Congress. Any hobbyist who works with lead should protest Senate bill S2637 or

encourage the adoption of the amendment exempting lead figures. Send photos of well-painted lead figures, and let the Congressmen see that miniatures are not toys and we respect our environment.

Also, September is our last guaranteed good-weather month before the winter miniatures-painting season. Now is the time you should be checking your house for a good painting location. The spot should have good sunlight, good ventilation (without freezing out the rest of the house), a large flat spot for a painting board, and several bright lights. Also think about the security of your figures. You'll have to protect them from such hostile forces as toddlers' teeth, savage mauling by the family pet, or the righteous wrath of a parent reminding you that you did not clean up your mess. These problems can turn pristine armies into discolored fishing weights. When all these requirements are met, then you are ready for painting.

Reviews

Denzien

c/o Stone Mountain Miniatures
P.O. Box 594
Broomfield CO 80038

DSF-200 Ventauran Star Legion— * * * $\frac{1}{2}$
Legion Officers
DSF-205—Legionnaires Set 1 * * * $\frac{1}{2}$

Stone Mountain Miniatures is better known to the historical gamer rather than the fantasy gamer. Its chief claims to fame are a well-done line of historical figures for several periods and a large selection of buildings for use with their miniatures. Now it enters the science-fiction field with the production of the Denzien line figures, licensed from England.

The figures submitted for review represent units hostile to Earth and her allies. The figures in these packs are dressed in identical space suits, with the major differences being in their positioning and weapons carried. Each space suit consists of large boots with thick, ridged soles and toe and heel plates. The legs are jointed and protected at the knees, with additional padding on the fronts and backs of the shins and the fronts of the thighs. The groin and rear are protected by an inflexible carapace that acts as the anchor for the legs and chest pieces, showing a joint at the waist that allows bending and turning. The breast plate is formed of a piece with overlaid armor protecting the upper chest and connecting at the back. A line goes from the belt to mid-back; this is the connector hose for the backpack. The shoulder joints are covered by plates similar to those of an American football player. The arms are covered by a series of jointed pieces, and the hands are in sealed, jointed gloves. The helmets have large, heart-shaped face screens; each has a bulge on the right side that could be a communications port or laser tracking

Miniatures' product ratings

*	Poor
**	Below average
***	Average
****	Above average
*****	Excellent



Wizard with Staff (Thunderbolt Mountain)

device. All the figures have small pins molded in mid-back, each pin used to secure the backpack communications and oxygen units, with controls molded on the rear.

DSF-200 contains four officers. Two officers differ only slightly, with M-16-like assault rifles pointing at the ground from their right hands and with their left hands on their hips. A third officer in the same pose has his helmet removed; his bald head is egg shaped, with pointed ears, sunken cheeks and eyes, a sharp chin, and a scowl. A fourth officer has his left hand out, signaling someone to stop. His head is cocked slightly to the right, and an advanced combat rifle, like a combination grenade launcher and large pistol with scope, is in his right hand. This officer also wears an extra belt ammo belt over his right shoulder.

DSF-205 represents the "grunts" of the legion. This pack of four troopers contains the heavy weapons platoon. All are dressed as noted earlier, except for differences in pockets or ammo packs. Figure #1 carries the same advanced combat rifle as the fourth officer previously noted, with a pistol strapped to his right side. The weapon is cradled in his arms and pointing left, while he faces straight ahead. Figure #2 has the same rifle and pistol, but is facing and firing to the left. Figure #3 is firing a well-detailed laser cannon and carries a power pack in place of the pistol. The figure faces and fires to his left. The last figure comes in two parts: a weapon and right arm, and the rest of the kneeling body. The figure is also equipped with a pistol. The bazooka-like assault weapon (with laser-type gunsight) and the attached arm are glued to the kneeling figure at the shoulder joint. Special care should be taken to make sure that the sight is lined

up with the faceplate and that the gun is secure against the left arm.

Both sets of figures were well done, with virtually no flash except between the legs of one figure. Special care should be taken to check all pieces before cutting away what looks like flash. I trimmed one officer, only to find what I thought was flash was actually the rifle strap. These figures scale out at 25 mm and can be used for any game from TSR's STAR FRONTIERS® to GDW's TRAVELLER* or MEGATRAVELLER* games. With their hex-shaped bases, you can quickly determine facings. They are \$6 per pack.

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

656 East McMillan
Cincinnati OH 45206-1991

Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures

70 Harcourt Street
Newark, Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM NG 241 RF

1008—Wizard with Staff

The newest addition to the Thunderbolt Mountain Miniatures' line is a wizard with a staff. The lead figure is scaled in 54 mm but stands over 60 mm tall, from his boots to the top of his pointed hat. The figure comes in two pieces, the wizard and the base. The base is 61 mm x 37 mm x 5 mm high; it's a flat surface with two holes for the pegs on the bottom of the wizard's feet, which hold the figure in the base after gluing or light melting with a soldering iron (be careful, as you can melt the figure's foot!). Also on the base are several small stones and several large chunks and pieces of a tablet with runes and designs. The base is not without its faults. A ridge-line runs completely around the base, and it must be filed off and smoothed to match the curve of the base. There was also some pitting, but that is easily fixed.

The wizard figure stands with his hand out, as if reaching for something. His leather boots have creases and stitched sections. His pants have flared, rolled cuffs that come to the top of the boots. Over these pants is a flowing robe that stretches to the ground and is split at the sides. The sleeves billow out to huge, flowing cuffs with runes on the hems. The robe is creased and wrinkled as if there is a wind or the wizard is moving. There is some slight pitting on the lower part of the robe. The robe is cinched by a wide, studded belt, and a pouch with ornate designs hangs from the belt on the right. Over all this is a flowing cape that reaches from his shoulders to the base. A conical hat with a wide brim completes the clothing.

The wizards face shows signs of strain. His eyes and nose are detailed, and he has a long moustache that reaches to mid-chest and blends into his waist-length

beard. A ring is on the outstretched right hand. His left hand clutches a gnarled oak staff held slightly off the ground. The top of the staff is notched as if for a crystal, although none is in the kit and it is marked as optional.

This is a quality figure, but not quite as good as some of the previous miniatures sent to me. I recommend that if you purchase this figure, you get a crystal or glass gem for the top of the staff, and a pearl or a gem for the outstretched hand. This is a good buy at \$9.

Houston's Ships

P.O. Box 14522
Oklahoma City OK 73113

C + G-24—Cloudships and Gunboats—U.S.S. Eagle

Most people have seen pictures of the U.S.S. *Eagle*, a tall sailing ship presently attached to the U.S. Coast Guard as a cadet-training vessel. But, in the alternate history of GDW's SPACE: 1889* game, the *Eagle* is a very effective enforcer, a fully armed cloudship.

The miniature looks like a flat-bottomed boat with wings. The front wings have a total length of 15 mm and are rectangular in appearance. The hull itself is 33 mm long from stem to stern, 10 mm wide, and 3 mm tall, not including cabins and stacks. Tail plane surfaces are 18 mm in size and have a standard H-shape with the prop centered.

Detailling on this miniature includes planking, lifewood vents, rocket launchers on the bottom of the hull, and a forward cabin. Side detailing includes portholes and a weapons mount, but a mold line needs to be cleaned up and smoothed out—not a difficult project, but one that needs to be done. Cabins are visible, as is the top detail, which includes deck planking with offset board ends. One gun forward and one aft are visible; these are not extremely detailed. Wing-mounted weapons are also visible but, again, are not very detailed.

This miniature is highly recommended for anyone who plays the SPACE: 1889* game and wants to fight air battles. These miniatures are 1/1200th scale and can be used with many other models. You will have to work on the stand and mounting of this model, but the piece is eminently playable without having to worry about breaking fine detail parts. Do be careful anyway, as there is a high amount of tin in the miniature. With the information sheet enclosed, it is a good buy at \$2.50 each.



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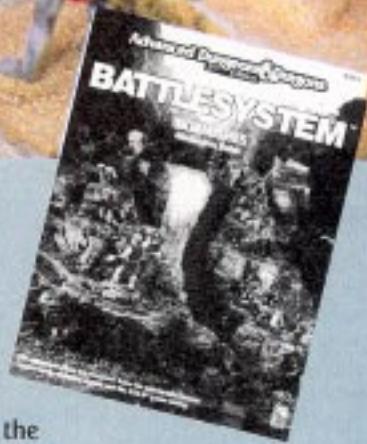
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Armored Warrior (Black Dragon Pewter)

Black Dragon Pewter

2700 Range Road
North Bellmore NY 11710

9623—Armored Warrior

Pewter collectors, take heed of the new address of Black Dragon Pewter. This organization has reorganized to fill your orders better and provide better company support. Their plans include staying indefinitely at the above address.

We present here a new figure in this company's pewter line, that of an armored female warrior. The figure, in free scale, measures out to just over 77 mm tall and almost 20 mm across the shoulders; she wields a sword bigger than most 25 mm AD&D® game figures.

The figure wears mid-calf, fur-lined boots; her legs are bare from there to her upper thighs. Her main garment seems to be a short shift with short sleeves, covered by a chain mail dress with a low neckline and breastplates. The upper chest is bare except for a necklace of intricately done wire. A chain mail bracer is on the left wrist, and a glove is on her right hand, which rests on the hilt of her sword. Her head is covered by a helmet that is a combination of Byzantine and Norman helmets with studs and a reinforcing strap. Her



Frantz Fusion Gun on Ground Mount (Stan Johansen)

chain mail is cinched by a thin belt and chain buckle. Her sword sheath almost blends into the hilt; there is an obvious break in the pattern, but no deep crack. The sword pommel looks more showy than useful.

Muscle detail is lacking on legs and arms, with a skin and leg finish and tone more commonly seen with nylons than on legs developed for fighting and climbing. There is some small pitting in different areas. Facial detail is very good with a serious, almost arrogant look. Her hair goes down in waves to about mid-back.

This figure is well done but does not look quite right, as if the legs were too long for the body. This is a good piece, but not great unless you are collecting pewter figures. Price is \$30.

Stan Johansen Miniatures

128 Barberton Rd
Lake Worth FL 33467

SMO20—Frantz Fusion Cannon on Ground Mount

This model has the same gun assembly as the gun and grav vehicle from issue #172. The multibarreled gun with steel bands and wired power supply remains, as does the radar laser sight and control arm. The breech block, the power box and controls on the right side, and the seat are still the same. The ground mount has three grav discs, spaced in a triangular pattern, and a round main plate with a clear-cut diamond pattern. A towing hook is at the plate's rear, and a major power supply and control box on the lower deck completes this model. It also has the same crew as the grav tank.

This model is highly recommended for use with any SF game systems. For bigger scales, the seat can be bent to accommo-

date larger figures. For smaller scales, you can build weapons platforms for the figure. This is a good model for use with forts, defensive positions, and pillboxes, and it's a good buy at \$7 each.

Lance & Laser

PO Box 14491
Columbus OH 43214

T-023—Tamerlin

We're going to finish off the submitted TALISLANTA* game figures by presenting the best one last (this game is produced by Bard Games). Tamerlin's stories and charts form much of the player's knowledge gained through one supplement, *The Chronicles of Talislanta*. This character was also a wizard and adventurer of high esteem, as proven by the fact that many of his entries start with a magical entrance.

The figure is of lead and scaled for use with 25 mm figures; it is 24 mm to its eyes and 33 mm to the top of the visiting mini-dragon. It stands on an oval base and is one of the busiest figures I have seen in a long time, not even surpassed by Ral Partha Import's "Complete Adventurer."

To begin, if you have a copy of *The Chronicles of Talislanta*, look on the back page. The miniature is almost a perfect recreation of the line drawing there. If you are looking for an excellent wizard figure, see if this fits your bill.

The feet of the miniature are covered by high boots that end at the shins. These boots show buttons on the side and appear to be made of two different types of material. Puffed pants with ragged edges can be seen with close examination, and the upper part of his body is covered by a long shirt with plain, billowing sleeves. His coat is trimmed by an embroidered seam that is visible on the model but is very



Tamerlin (Lance & Laser)

shallow, and all his pockets bulge. His belt is of tooled leather. A dagger is evident, tucked in the belt behind a component bag. His right hand grasps a staff with a demon's head crowned by horns and a jewel. The figure's head is covered by a full cap that even shows a jewel over his forehead and more shallow detail on the hem. As an extra wrap, he wears a cape that flows behind him.

The figure's face is serious, as if he were concentrating. A full beard and moustache are here, with the detail of individual strands, and his mouth is open slightly as if to cast a spell in conjunction with somatic gestures. Besides the small dragon perched on top of his pack, there is a bedroll, frying pan, and waterskins all strapped on correctly. Unfortunately, you can't see into the pack.

I found no flash on this miniature, and there are no evident mold lines. The detail is excellent. I can give no higher recommendation other than saying that this figure has become my mage character in the only AD&D campaign that I get to play in. It's an excellent value at \$1.50 each.

Alternative Armies

6 Parkway Court
Glaisdale Parkway, Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM NG8 4GN
(Available to hobby stores in the U.S.A.
through Armory Distributors)

FL-8—Mercenaries of Dresda ****

This pack contains two figures, showing a knight and his well-armored squire or yeoman. These figures are molded of lead and scale out at about 30 mm to the eyes, which places them head and shoulder above 2.5 mm figures made by U.S. companies but compare favorably to the out-sized scale used by Games Workshop or



Mercenaries of Dresda (Alternative Armies)

the other larger figures coming out now.

The squire is clad totally in chain mail from just above the mouth to his feet, including gloved hands. His feet have stirrups on them, and one hand holds a pennant. His pennant is mounted on a lance and has a large amount of flash in the notches and lower shaft. The squire is also wearing a jerkin, split to allow easy movement and riding, that features a clasp on one shoulder and a "favor" tied to his sleeve. His head is covered by a Byzantine-type helmet, and a sword in a scabbard is at his side. His horse is trotting with legs held up by molded tufts of grass. Tack detail is good, except for the filled spots between too-thick reins and muzzle and a mold line through the saddle and the horse's head (this latter part is easy to fix). There is no noticeable cup in which to tuck the lance and pennant, so the squire's arm will get sore lugging the lance around all day.

The knight is riding what appears to be a horse armored only in cloth; the mount is probably very hot. A mold line runs across the horse's head, saddle, and hind-quarters but is easily removed. The reins are too big and solid. The horse is not moving fast but still is supported by a tuft of grass. The knight himself seems to be in a joust, as one hand is positioned as if holding a lance. Imagine his surprise when he is unhorsed, as there is no lance for him in the package. The knight is dressed in plate over chain on his lower body, with stirrups, pointed boots, and a cloth-covered breastplate. His arms are covered with chain mail and small plates. A heaume (great helm) and feather are worn, dating from the late 13th century in our time, and he has a long sword at his side.

These are nice simple figures for playing but are not of collector quality. The fig-

ures are very large compared to those from companies like Ral Partha, but do fit within Mark Copplestone's range from Grenadier. They are a bit expensive at \$6 per pack.

Grenadier Models

P.O. Box 305
Springfield PA 19064

Grenadier Models UK Ltd.

19 Babbage Road
Deeside, Clwyd, Wales
UNITED KINGDOM CH5 2QB

1410—Wood Elf Command **½**

As the genre of large-scale figures continues to grow and armies rise to fight on the fields, command units become a necessity. Command units must match in style and size the figures they lead. This command pack fits the requirements well.

The wood elf command unit is scaled for the larger 28-30 mm format compatible with Games Workshop's figures, which is not too surprising considering that the designer was a former GW sculptor. The figures are made of lead and represent commands for two groups, plus a trumpeter.

Group one consists of figures #604 and #605, representing the boar tribe. The standard bearer is dressed in roll-down boots and has bare legs up to his loincloth, which drops front and back to his knees and is secured by a wide belt. His chest and arms are bare, but his back is covered by a simple round shield. His hands are gloved; in his right hand is the standard and totem, and the left hand holds a sword with curved crossbars and an elongated hilt. His face is gaunt and serious. The hair is swept back. There is some flash between the arm and his body.

The chief of this group holds two long



Wood Elf Command (Grenadier Models)

swords similar to the standard bearer's. He is dressed identically to the standard bearer, except that his loincloth is studded and he has a cape on his back. In addition to the same serious look and gaunt face, his hair is braided and he has an ornate pendant on his chest. This elf is shouting a challenge.

Group two represents the clan of the stag. The standard bearer generally resembles his opposite from the boar clan. His sword is slightly curved and sheathed. Both gloved hands extend the standard in front of him as if leading an attack. He wears a cloak held on by two buttons and a chain across the chest. A water skin hangs from his thin belt, and earrings are visible. His hair is swept back from his serious face.

The stag-clan leader points to the front and wears a cape, a full tunic, and a breastplate. His hair is braided, and eyebrows arch under braided locks and curly hair.

The trumpeter blows a long, curved horn carved to resemble a flared fish. His cheeks are puffed, and his eyes are slightly closed.

Wood Elf Eagle Rider & Hero (Grenadier Models)

ly closed. He wears a breastplate and has a small shield hanging from his belt; otherwise, he is identical to the other elves.

If you have other elven sets in this scale, this is a well-recommended group to lead them. If you game in 25 mm mostly, skip this set unless you don't mind varying sizes. The price is \$5.95 per group.

1413—Wood Elf Eagle Rider * * * $\frac{1}{2}$

1417—Wood Elf Hero Eagle Rider * * * $\frac{1}{2}$

In any war, air power is important. The wood elves use sharp-eyed eagles to spot their enemies and deliver troops, also serving as archery platforms. Unfortunately, I'm not sure these miniatures would be useful even in a fantasy world.

The elf rider, scaled to 28 mm, is dressed in tight-fitting leggings and a long tunic. He clutches a bow in his left hand and guides the eagle with his right. Bracers and wristbands are on both arms. A full quarrel of arrows is located on his back in a woven holder, and his hair flies back as if to tangle in their shafts. His expression shows anger and purpose. His sharp,

pointed ears both have earrings, and he wears a necklace.

The elf hero has no clothing except boots, a loincloth, and belts. He also has a wristband and has a shield strapped across his back and a pouch on his right side. A sword is thrust straight out in his right hand while he guides the eagle with his left hand. A look of concentration is on his face, and his hair blows in the wind. There was a little flash on the sword hilt and the elf's right leg, but it was easily cleaned up.

The disadvantages of these miniatures come with the giant eagles. Both birds have very good feather detail with feather veins visible and have almost identical wingspans. The eagle with the hero is in a possible attack position, with talons down and its head and back set as if to peck. The eagle with the Bowman is in flight, with its legs back and its head streamlined in a good representation of flight.

But the parts to these birds don't fit together easily, and filling is required where the wings join the body. Even this would not be so bad except that the wing span is only 102 mm, and the eagles have a body length of 50 mm. Realistically, this would not be sufficient to carry an elf without magical assistance.

When all the trimming of flash is done, not much magic will remain. These are a must only if you need scouts for your elves. The price is \$5.95 per pack of eagle and rider.

Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.

5938 Carthage Court
Cincinnati OH 45212

11-408—Troll

Last month, we reviewed an armored troll. This month, we check over the old-fashioned kind, the standard AD&D game troll. This 25 mm lead figure is from Ral Partha's line of licensed AD&D miniatures. The troll is walking hunched over, but if straightened out it would be just short of 40 mm (9' tall in scale). The figure is unclothed, with well-detailed ropey muscles and warty, rough skin. Ribs are easily seen on the chest, and veins and muscles in the neck stand out. His mouth is open in a howl, with teeth separations visible. The gaunt cheeks and sunken eyes complete the face, topped by straight hair.

The figure I was given for review is not quite up to Ral Partha's standards, and, neither were the same figures at my store. Mold lines and flash extend down from the chest and stomach, with some flash extending to the groin. Flash was evident in one semi-closed fist, and tight, unbreakable flash extends between the left arm and the body.

Even so, I still recommend this figure, if only for its game-use potential, and it's not expensive at \$3.50 each.





Troll (Ral Partha)

11-416—Lesser Golems

* * * * ½

Golems are servants created by wizards to do their bidding; as long as the task is simple, golems can do it. This pack represents the lesser golems of the AD&D game, those of flesh and clay. These miniatures are made of lead and scaled in 25 mm, and they fit the bill.

The clay golem is a massive, muscled creep with no neck. He stands just under 35 mm, so he is tall by game stats (about 8'). His sculpted muscles give the impression of an ideal man. The golem wears a sumo-type loincloth and nothing else. His mouth is a slit, and his eyes look out from sunken sockets exuding hatred. His lowered right hand is clenched in a tight fist, while his left hand is open slightly. The arms are stretched out from his sides. Raised mold lines on both sides will require some careful work to avoid ruining the detail.

The flesh golem, on the other hand, is thin, and his musculature is more human-like. He wears ragged, rotting clothing from his waist to the dragging cutoffs on the ground. Patches and suture lines cover his body, with some separation of flesh visible. His head is devoid of hair and his face is grim of expression and bears an uncanny resemblance to Tombstone of Marvel's *Spider-Man* comics' fame. The right hand and arm are raised as if to strike down. There are no visible mold lines or flash on this miniature.

These miniatures are highly recommended as well-done playing pieces. No evil mage should leave home without one. The price is \$3.50 per pack.

11-421—Kobolds

* * * * *

Kobolds are everyone's favorite punching bag in AD&D games. Whenever parties get together, piles of dead kobolds result. These little guys must have either a cloning machine or litters of thousands to withstand the casualties they take and not become extinct. No matter how they do it, you love to hate them.



Lesser Golems (Ral Partha)

The kobolds in this pack represent the common, poor folk in the kobold world. These kobolds are made of lead in 25 mm scale, but measure only 15 mm tall. The figures come seven to a pack, with four different poses. All of the kobolds are dressed in loincloths, ragged shirts, and foot wrappings. Their faces match the AD&D game descriptions, and their bodies are heavy, complete with long, nonprehensile tails. All are mounted on square bases.

The pack includes two kobolds thrusting with short spears while holding square, woven shields. Swords hang from belts on their right rear. Another kobold holds a large spear as if on guard; he also holds an ornate shield with studs and has a short sword. He looks like a leader. Two other kobolds are attacking with spiked clubs, using shields but having no swords. The last two kobolds are attacking with short swords and holding shields, but are posed differently.

There was no flash or heavy mold lines on these figures, and I highly recommend

Kobolds (Ral Partha)



them for anyone who uses figures for AD&D game combat, either in individual fights or for fantasy miniatures battles. However, you will have to buy four or five packs to get the number of troops needed for most miniatures rules' unit organization. These are a good buy at \$5 per pack.

That's it for this month. If you have any questions you want to ask me or you need to reach me, my address is:

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